



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE SOVIET  
WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN: EXAMPLES  
FOR U.S. POLICY CONCERNING CENTRAL ASIA AND  
AFGHANISTAN AFTER 2014**

by

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December 2014

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AFGHANISTAN: EXAMPLES FOR U.S. POLICY CONCERNING CENTRAL  
ASIA AND AFGHANISTAN AFTER 2014**

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requirements for the degree of

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December 2014**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The future of Afghanistan and its neighboring Central Asian countries is uncertain as U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces prepare to draw down and transition to training, advising, and assisting Afghan National Forces. What are the critical threats to regional stability in Afghanistan and Central Asia post 2014? What can the U.S. government and military do to promote stability in this region? This thesis investigates these questions by comparing the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, along with the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, which caused social, political, and economic upheaval, to possible causes of instability in Afghanistan and Central Asia post-2014.

This thesis finds that the sudden and complete loss of financial assistance from Moscow in 1992 led to the collapse of the Afghan government and turmoil in Central Asia. Furthermore, similar conditions exist today and could be exacerbated if the United States follows a strategy of total disengagement from the region. Therefore, the U.S. government and military needs to maintain a presence in the region and should continue to focus on capacity building, particularly in the areas of border security, civil society building, and economic stabilization.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| ANSF      | Afghan National Security Forces                          |
| ASFF      | Afghan Security Forces Fund                              |
| BSA       | bilateral security agreement                             |
| CNA       | Center for Naval Analyses                                |
| CASA-1000 | Central Asia-South Asia                                  |
| CPSU      | Communist Party of the Soviet Union                      |
| COIN      | counter-insurgency                                       |
| DRA       | Democratic Republic of Afghanistan                       |
| EIU       | Economist Intelligence Unit                              |
| FDCS      | Federal Drug Control Service                             |
| GBAO      | Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast                       |
| GDP       | gross domestic product                                   |
| IMF       | International Monetary Fund                              |
| ISAF      | International Security Assistance Forces                 |
| IMU       | Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan                           |
| IRPT      | Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan                  |
| IRP       | Islamic Renaissance Party                                |
| LCSOF     | Limited Contingent of Soviet Forces                      |
| NCAFP     | National Committee on American Foreign Policy            |
| NRP       | national reconciliation policy                           |
| NSC       | National Security Council                                |
| NATO      | North Atlantic Treaty Organization                       |
| PDPA      | People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan                 |
| RRS       | Region of Republic Subordination                         |
| SA        | security assistance                                      |
| SIGAR     | Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction |
| SOFA      | status of forces agreement                               |
| SIPRI     | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute         |

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| TCCC  | tactical combat casualty care             |
| TMAF  | Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework     |
| USAID | U.S. Agency for International Development |
| USGS  | U.S. Geological Survey                    |
| USSOF | U.S. Special Operations Forces            |
| USSR  | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics       |
| UNODC | United Nations Office on Drug and Crime   |
| USIP  | United States Institute of Peace          |
| UTO   | United Tajik Opposition                   |
| VEOs  | violent extremists organizations          |

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. BACKGROUND

On September 30, 2014, the United States signed a bilateral security agreement (BSA) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) signed a status of forces agreement (SOFA) with the newly formed Afghan Government of National Unity, effectively ending major combat operations in December 2014 and stipulating the presence of a small force for training, advising, and counterterrorism missions.<sup>1</sup> Despite this landmark agreement, the decision to reduce U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan and the impact of doing so on the region remain hotly debated. For example, a November 2013 report drafted by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy (NCAFP) presents an optimistic account of post-2014 Afghanistan. Specifically, it contends that its military is the best trained and largest in the area.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, this account claims that the Taliban are a minor influence that cannot undo the cultural change and modernization that has already begun as a result of 13 years of NATO and international influence; they, therefore, will not be a significant threat to Afghan or regional security.<sup>3</sup> Somewhat surprisingly, the same report further contends,

...that Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world, that no regime will be able to survive without substantial external support, and that the Afghan military is unprepared to carry on alone—accordingly, it contends, changes brought about by the decade of foreign presence will vanish into a ‘black hole.’<sup>4</sup>

Militants, drug traffickers, and violent extremist organizations (VEOs) will have increased freedom of movement across the porous borders of Central Asia with no U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> Margherita Stancati, and Nathan Hodge, “Afghanistan Signs Security Pact with U.S., NATO,” *The Wall Street Journal*, September 30, 2014.. <http://online.wsj.com/articles/u-s-afghan-bilateral-security-agreement-signed-1412076436>.

<sup>2</sup> *Central Asia/Caspian Sea Basin Region after the Withdrawal of U.S. and NATO Troops from Afghanistan*, National Committee on American Foreign Policy, Roundtable Conference, Washington, DC November 2013, 7, <http://www.ncafp.org/ncafp/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/NCAFP-Central-Asia-Roundtable-Report-.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

or NATO military forces to apply pressure and disrupt operations. As a result, instability is more likely to occur both within Afghanistan and with its neighbors.

With these debates over the future of Afghanistan and its neighboring Central Asian countries in mind, this thesis seeks to investigate the following questions: What are the critical threats to regional stability that Afghanistan and Central Asia faces post 2014? Is it likely the Taliban and other regionally destabilizing jihadists will re-emerge in Afghanistan and Central Asia more broadly? What can the U.S. government and military do to promote stability in this region?

In order to investigate these questions, this thesis posits that valuable lessons can be learned from the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and applied to the current efforts of U.S. and NATO forces to disengage from Afghanistan. Specifically, this thesis will compare the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, and its support of a communist government from 1989–1991, to U.S. strategies for withdrawal in 2014. What steps can NATO and the United States take to prevent a similar collapse of the government that occurred in 1992? Furthermore, if Afghanistan's stability is also linked to key Central Asian states, what can the U.S. government and military do to promote stability in these countries?

Looking back, the Soviet Union took several measures aimed at ensuring Afghan stability following its withdrawal in 1989. It installed an Afghan government that was sympathetic to its interests and, despite being disjointed and unpopular, was able to stay in power after Soviet military forces withdrew. Furthermore, the Soviet Union also infused Afghanistan with massive amounts of economic assistance aimed at maintaining a functioning economy, paying the Afghan military, and buying off political foes. The Soviets also created Afghan forces that proved to be both competent and capable of handling domestic security concerns on their own after the Soviets withdrawal. However, when Soviet economic assistance abruptly stopped in 1991, the government no longer had money to pay salaries, buy off tribal militias, or fund the economy.

Today, President Ghani's administration faces many of the same challenges as the Najibullah regime did in 1991, including corruption, competing internal political interest,



credibility issues, dependence on foreign aid, and attacks from violent extremist organizations. Economically, Afghanistan is also in a similar position to that following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. As then, Afghanistan is utterly dependent on foreign assistance. Furthermore, Afghanistan is wracked with social tensions and inequalities based on ethnicity, tribal affiliation, and gender. However, the last decade has seen some improvements in civil society building. It is also possible that Afghanistan's security forces will prove capable of independently defending Afghanistan against domestic threats, provided aid and assistance do not cease.

Further comparisons can be drawn between the effects of the Soviet Union's collapse on key Central Asian states and the substantial withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces in 2014, accompanied by the possible cessation of financial aid to the region. The rapid collapse of the Soviet Union placed inexperienced leaders in power who resorted to the form of governance with which they were familiar, the Soviet model. However, the Soviet model did not provide the tools and resources of state building that these newly independent states required. Socially, the region experienced an identity crisis as it transitioned from being part of the Soviet Union to newly independent states. In some cases, new nationalist identities did not correspond with the multi-ethnic composition of these countries. In addition, Central Asia was one of the poorest regions in the Soviet Union and declined further with its collapse. Security in the region was also deeply affected by the dissolution of the Soviet Union and a bloody civil war broke out in Tajikistan, in addition to several spates of violence in the Ferghana valley, which shares borders with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, the three states that are the focus of this thesis.

Somewhat similarly, Central Asia also faces several challenges to stability after 2014. Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan now have over 20 years of experience functioning as independent countries; however, many of the lessons learned have been neither progressive nor productive. Economically, Central Asia has high levels of poverty and unemployment and considerable economic challenges. Corruption continues to be a considerable problem that goes hand-in hand with these countries' undemocratic practices. Socially, these countries face sub-state loyalties based on ethnicity and

regionalism. Central Asian security will probably experience increases of violence as coalition forces draw down from Afghanistan, but the reasons for violence will likely have as much to do with competition over natural resources, illicit trafficking, and a frustrated populace as from VEOs in the region.

By comparing the conditions under which the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989 and Afghanistan's subsequent loss of financial and military support brought about by the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991, this thesis will find that the biggest point of failure leading to the collapse of the Afghan government in 1992 and the political, social, and economic turmoil that ensued in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan was the loss of financial support from Moscow that allowed these regimes to buy off political competitors and keep the economy afloat. All Central Asian countries were dependent on Moscow for economic stability and military assistance; the Soviet Union did not take steps aimed at creating these states' self-sufficiency. When the money dried up, so did the influence and stability it created in the region. This observation offers important clues for how the U.S. government and U.S. forces should approach stabilizing the region moving forward. While financial aid may be necessary in the short run, long term success requires building the capacity of the region politically, economically, socially, in addition to building their security forces.

## **B. METHODOLOGY**

The thesis will use a controlled case study comparison of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 in order to gain insights into U.S. and NATO plans to leave Afghanistan at the end of 2014. Specifically, this thesis will investigate effects of both the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and the Soviet Union's 1991 collapse on the political, social, economic and military health of Afghanistan.

Furthermore, the thesis will trace the effects of the collapse of the Soviet Union on the Central Asian states, including specifically the effects on the governments, economies, security forces and societies of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. These three countries were chosen because of their immediate or close proximity to

Afghanistan, their similar internal struggles, their shared borders with the volatile Ferghana Valley, and the conflicts that have occurred between these states over resources and border security.

By analyzing these cases, the intent is to investigate if there are applicable lessons for the U.S. and NATO to be learned from the Soviet's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, and if so, what pitfalls both the U.S. and NATO could avoid by learning from the Soviet Union's decisions.

In examining both the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 and the U.S. NATO withdrawal at the end of 2014, this thesis will look specifically at the following factors of stability: governance, economic development, security force capability, and social well-being. Finally, this thesis will conclude with recommendations for actions that the U.S. government could take to help mitigate instability in the region, including the use of U.S. forces in security cooperation programs designed to train and equip counterterrorist forces, border security programs, disaster relief and emergency response, and humanitarian assistance programs in conjunction with other U.S. government led efforts.

### **C. THESIS OUTLINE**

The thesis proceeds as follows: Chapter II will discuss the effects of the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 and the USSR's 1991 collapse on Afghanistan, specifically, its effects on political, economic, social, and security conditions that led to instability and eventual civil war in Afghanistan in the 1990s. Chapter III will discuss the effects of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and collapse of the Soviet Union on the governance, economics, security and social dynamics of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Chapter IV examines the current political stability, economic conditions, social concerns, and security forces' capabilities in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Finally, Chapter V highlights lessons learned from the previous chapters followed by possible trajectories in Afghanistan and Central Asia after 2014, based on current conditions. The chapter concludes with possible strategies the U.S. government and military can take to

mitigate destabilizing factors, along with the relevance of the region to U.S. security and importance of maintaining some type of persistent military, diplomatic, and economic presence in the region.

## **II. THE IMPACT ON AFGHANISTAN FROM THE SOVIET WITHDRAWAL AND SOVIET COLLAPSE**

The withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan at the end of 2014, particularly U.S. forces, has raised numerous questions regarding the immediate and long-term stability of the country. However, uncertainty concerning the stability and security of Afghanistan is not new. From 1989 through 1992, Afghanistan experienced two significant transformative events. The first was the Soviet Union's military withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and the second was the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) at the end of 1991 and Afghanistan's subsequent loss of financial and military aid. These two events led to the collapse of the Soviet-backed Najibullah government, the descent into civil war, and the eventual rise of the Taliban regime and Al Qaeda safe haven.

This chapter investigates the impact of the Soviet Union's complete military withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and its end of military and financial aid in 1992 with the aim of comparing the conditions leading to Afghanistan's collapse in 1992 to those that may occur after NATO and U.S. troops withdrawal at the end of 2014. This chapter begins with a brief background of why and how the Soviets invaded and occupied Afghanistan. Then it provides an analysis of the decision and preparations of a Soviet withdrawal, including Soviet actions taken after the withdrawal. The chapter concludes by focusing on the collapse of the Soviet Union and the developments that occurred within Afghanistan as a result.

This chapter finds that the loss of direct military intervention by a superpower considerably altered the social and political landscape of Afghanistan. However, the end of superpower sponsorship due to the Soviet Union's collapse was more significant to the viability of Afghanistan and directly led to the collapse of the Najibullah regime. As will be argued, these findings are significant for NATO and U.S. plans to withdrawal from Afghanistan, and they offer insights into how a second collapse of the government could be postponed or even avoided.

## A. SOVIET INVASION

The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) was established on April 27, 1978, when a small group of Soviet-trained Afghans seized control of the government and installed communist Nur M. Taraki as president of the new socialist state.<sup>5</sup> President Taraki proposed a broad range of reforms from land redistribution to restructuring Afghanistan's social structure as a means of bringing the country in line with communist and Soviet principles. Taraki's policies found some support among some city inhabitants, but failed to gain the backing of the overall population who found the changes contrary to Afghan norms and tribal customs. Simultaneously, the Communist party was split into two factions that spent more time fighting one another than trying to promote Communism. In September 1979, Hafizullah Amin, Taraki's prime minister, assassinated Taraki and seized power. Amin's rule was less successful than Taraki's, and the Soviets watched in fear as the new communist state spun out of control.<sup>6</sup>

Following the assassination of Taraki, the Soviet leadership decided direct military action was necessary to stabilize the situation. From December 25–27, 1979, the Soviets successfully executed a coup de main in Afghanistan that took control of the government. The Soviets quickly seized major cities, centers of power, and radio stations, in addition to executing President Amin, and installing a communist exile, Babrak Karmal, as the country's new leader.<sup>7</sup> The Soviets successfully consolidated power in the cities, but were unable to control the countryside, and a rebellion followed. Sovietologist Lester Grau describes the rebellion's origins: "Religious leaders proclaimed jihad against the Communist regime and bands of Mujahideen took to the field to defend the faith."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Dibb, "The Soviet Experience in Afghanistan: Lessons to Be Learned?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 64, no. 5 (2010): 496, doi:10.1080/10357718.2010.513366.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Lester W. Grau, and Voennaia akademiia imeni M.V. Frunze, *The Bear Went over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1996), xviii.

<sup>8</sup> Lester Grau, "Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan." *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 20, no. 2 (2007): 236, doi:10.1080/13518040701373080.

A protracted guerrilla war began in the months following the invasion. Soviet military leadership recommended withdrawal, but political leaders decided to increase troop strength from three to over five divisions.<sup>9</sup> The Soviet Union's plan was to stabilize the country and withdraw the bulk of Limited Contingent of Soviet Forces (LCSOF) within three years.<sup>10</sup> The initial military plan aimed to emplace garrisons along main routes, major cities, airbases and logistics sites; push Afghan forces into the countryside to battle the resistance; provide logistic, air, and intelligence support to Afghan forces; maintain minimal interface between Soviet occupation forces and the local populace; and strengthen the Afghan forces so that Soviet forces could withdraw once the resistance was defeated.<sup>11</sup> However, the 50,000 Soviet combat troops that initially entered Afghanistan were not organized, trained, or equipped for the insurgency that followed the invasion.<sup>12</sup>

The Soviets did not anticipate the strength of the resistance and became involved in a protracted conflict that lasted over nine years. Ultimately, of the 642,000 Soviets who served during the war, 14,453 were killed, and 53,753 were wounded or injured.<sup>13</sup> These numbers do not include an additional 115,308 that suffered from infectious hepatitis and 31,080 that contracted typhoid fever.<sup>14</sup> The Soviets also suffered heavy losses in military equipment, including 118 jets, 333 helicopters, 147 tanks, 1314 armored personnel carriers, 433 artillery pieces and mortars, 510 engineering vehicles, and 11,369 trucks.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Grau, "Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos," 237.

<sup>10</sup> Dibb, "The Soviet Experience in Afghanistan," 496.

<sup>11</sup> Grau and Frunze, *The Bear Went over the Mountain*, xix.

<sup>12</sup> Mark E. Calvert, "Withdrawal from Conflict: Historical Lessons for the Future" (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air War College, 2008), 10, <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA540263>

<sup>13</sup> Lester W. Grau, and William A. Jorgensen, "Handling the Wounded in a Counter-Guerrilla War: The Soviet/Russian Experience in Afghanistan and Chechnya," *Journal of Special Operations* 7, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 65, <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a498077>

<sup>14</sup> Grau and Frunze, *The Bear Went over the Mountain*, xiv.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, xix.

## **B. SOVIET WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN**

On February 15, 1989, the last Soviet convoy crossed the bridge from Afghanistan into Uzbekistan and finalized the Soviet military withdrawal from Afghanistan after nine years of war. The Soviet decision to withdraw stemmed from internal political and economic changes which resulted in the Soviet Union reevaluating its national interests with respect to Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev came to power on March 11, 1985, and imposed a one year deadline to make a military solution work in Afghanistan. This policy decision resulted in 1985 being the bloodiest year of fighting in the war.<sup>17</sup> Ultimately, the Soviets were unable to decisively destroy the mujahedeen without drastically increasing the number of Soviet troops. General Mikhail Zaitsev, top Soviet commander in Afghanistan, reported a Soviet military victory required closure of the Pakistan border and at least 250,000 extra troops, both which he described as unrealistic.<sup>18</sup>

In October 1985, Gorbachev recommended to the Politburo that they endorse Zaitsev's strategy of pushing for the earliest possible withdrawal from Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup> In Gorbachev's first address to the 27<sup>th</sup> congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on February 26, 1986, he referred to Afghanistan as "a bleeding wound" and signaled his intent to withdraw Soviet forces from Afghanistan.<sup>20</sup> The idea that the war could not be won was shared by politicians and military leaders alike. In November 1986, Marshal of the Soviet Army, Sergei Akhromeyev, told the Politburo,

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<sup>16</sup> Calvert, "Withdrawal from Conflict," 22.

<sup>17</sup> Grau, "Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos," 237.

<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that from 1985–1986 the Soviet armed forces numbered 5,130,000 of which 1,991,000 were ground forces and this does not include reservist. This number illustrates that the Soviets had the military forces to conduct a troop increase but decided against doing so. Numbers were taken from, "The Soviet Union," *The Military Balance* 86, no. 1 (January 1986): 36–37; Jonathan Steele, "A Tale of Two Retreats: Afghan Transition in Historical Perspective," *Central Asian Survey* 32, no. 3 (September 2013): 308.

<sup>19</sup> Steele, "A Tale of Two Retreats," 308.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.



After seven years in Afghanistan, there is not one square kilometre [sic] left untouched by a boot of a Soviet soldier. But as soon as they leave a place, the enemy returns and restores it all back the way it used to be. We have lost this battle.<sup>21</sup>

Even in the face of such realism, Soviet forces would not begin to withdraw in significant numbers until May 1988. The Soviets wanted to withdraw from Afghanistan on their terms and allow time for the Afghan government time to develop a strategy of national reconciliation that involved incorporating the mujahedeen into the government.<sup>22</sup>

On April 14, 1988, after several years of stalled negotiations, a series of agreements to end the fighting in Afghanistan were signed, including three bilateral agreements between the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and an additional “Declaration of International Guarantees” between the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>23</sup> Collectively, these documents were referred to as the Afghan Geneva Accords. One of the provisions from the Accords provided two phased timetables for the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. The timeline stipulated, “One half of the troops will be withdrawn by 15 August 1988 and the withdrawal of all troops will be completed within nine months.”<sup>24</sup> However, the Soviets did not tie the timetable to specific military and political conditions.<sup>25</sup>

The Soviets informed Afghan leadership to prepare for withdrawal before the decision was made public. In March 1985, Afghan leader Babrak Karmal visited Moscow for the funeral of Konstantin Chernenko, and Gorbachev instructed him to alter his domestic policies and include “progressive forces” because Soviet troops could not stay indefinitely.<sup>26</sup> Karmal was unable to make progress on the changes envisioned by

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 308.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Rosanne Klass, “Afghanistan: The Accords,” *Foreign Affairs* 66, no. 5 (July 1988): 922, doi:10.2307/20043571.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 923.

<sup>25</sup> Grau, “Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos,” 253.

<sup>26</sup> Steele, “A Tale of Two Retreats,” 307.

Moscow and was replaced by Dr. Mohammad Najibullah in May 1986.<sup>27</sup> Najibullah would be in charge of implementing national reforms to open negotiations with opposition movements to create a more inclusive government.

Najibullah, aware he was on a timeline to produce results, began to implement political changes. In November 1986, Najibullah introduced a new constitution that introduced a multi-party system and an Islamic legal system, and in December of that same year, he announced a national reconciliation policy (NRP) that proposed a cease fire, dialogue with opposition leaders, and a possible coalition government.<sup>28</sup> The NRP was based on four principles: immediate cessation of hostilities, meeting of local leaders from all sides at a round table, creation of a transitional government, and the holding of free general elections.<sup>29</sup> Najibullah also worked to be perceived as more Islamic. In November 1987, he introduced a new constitution in which he changed the country's name to the Republic of Afghanistan while convening a Loya Jirga—council of tribal chiefs, village elders, and other political/social leaders across Afghanistan—to approve the new constitution and his assumption as president.<sup>30</sup> In 1988, Najibullah attempted to gain popular support by changing the name of the Afghan Communist Party from the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) to the Hizb-I Watan (Homeland Party) and allowing non-Communists into the government, although never in positions of authority.<sup>31</sup>

The NRP was a drastic shift in state policy and did have some success in fighting the insurgency and state building. Having failed to form a strong centralized government, the NRP worked on creating a decentralized state through arrangements between the central government and individual regional actors, with local autonomy guaranteed in

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<sup>27</sup> Alex. Marshall, *Phased Withdrawal, Conflict Resolution and State Reconstruction*, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom: Conflict Studies Research Centre, June 2006, 2, <http://www.da.mod.uk/colleges/arag/document-listings/ca/06%2829%29AM.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Grau, "Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos," 244–246.

<sup>29</sup> Marshall, *Phased Withdrawal*, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Grau, "Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos," 246.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

return for ceasefires.<sup>32</sup> Ethnic minorities that had been excluded during previous attempts benefited from the changes in policy. Two such groups were the Hazara and Uzbeks of northern Afghanistan. The 40,000 armed men of the Jauzjani Uzbek militia led by Abdul Rashid Dostum proved to be one of the fiercest and most competent forces that fought on behalf of the regime.<sup>33</sup> In 1989, at the time of Soviet withdrawal, Dostum's forces were relabeled as the 53<sup>rd</sup> Division and answered directly to Najibullah while serving as the regime's sole mobile reserve in 1989.<sup>34</sup>

The implementation of the NRP also had significant shortcomings. When the Soviets withdrew in 1989, the chief executive department (Najibullah and four deputies) had two Parchami, one Khalqi, and two non-party members; compared to the Supreme Soviet time period prior to Najibullah when the department had 14 Parchami, six Khalqi, and one non-party member.<sup>35</sup> Najibullah had already begun to consolidate his power base by reducing the number of personnel with potential opposition. The success of the NRP would not be realized until the Soviets withdrew.

In conjunction with national reconciliation efforts, the Soviets provided economic and humanitarian aid and did what they could to build up, train, and equip Afghan forces prior to the Soviet withdrawal. Realizing the need for a stable urban population, the Soviet Union established a ground and air supply corridor to Kabul and Kandahar in 1988. The primary cargo was flour delivered in 15 to 20 daily transport aircraft loads that amounted to 15,000 tons of flour a month.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to allowing time for political consolidation, the Soviets also took steps to strengthen the Afghan's military. The Soviets handed over enormous amounts of munitions, weapons, and other equipment to Afghan soldiers and provided a small contingent of advisors to help with training, logistics, and airstrikes to help the Afghan

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<sup>32</sup> Marshall, *Phased Withdrawal*, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>35</sup> Grau, "Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos," 246.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 253.

government. In all, the Soviets transferred 184 garrisons' worth of equipment valued at 699 million rubles and transferred government equipment worth 98.3 million rubles.<sup>37</sup> The Soviets ensured that the Afghan armed forces had at least a three-month reserve of ammunition, fuel and food. The three-month reserves constituted over 28,200 tons of ammunition, 65,270 tons of vehicle and aviation fuel, 30,000 tons of food, 3990 vehicles, 538 indirect fire weapons, 14,443 small arms, and 1,706 rocket launchers.<sup>38</sup> In addition to transferring goods and materiel, the Soviets provided trainers to educate Afghans on unfamiliar equipment and made sure it was in working order.

Alongside military aid, the Soviets continued to provide economic assistance to Kabul at around \$300 million per month or between \$3 billion to \$4 billion annually.<sup>39</sup> Soviet assistance, aid and supplies were aimed to stabilize the Afghan government, ensure the Afghans that they had the resources available to handle security on their own, and to assure them that the Soviet Union would not abandon them.

Soviet forces began withdrawing from Afghanistan in earnest on May 15, 1988. One of the concerns during the withdrawal was the susceptibility of Soviet forces to guerrilla attacks. A response to this concern was securing safe passage of convoys by arranging cease fires and hiring mujahedeen groups and local militias for security.<sup>40</sup> Of particular concern were the Tajik mujahedeen leader Ahmed Shah Massoud and his forces which occupied large portions along the Soviet route. The Soviets had arranged a cease fire with Massoud as early as 1983 that allowed both sides time to consolidate and rebuild their forces.<sup>41</sup> This initial ceasefire paved the way for a temporary cease fire in late 1988 and early 1989 between Massoud and Soviet General Valentin Varennikov.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Mark N. Katz, "Lessons of the Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan," Middle East Policy Council, 2014, <http://www.mepc.org/articles-commentary/commentary/lessons-soviet-withdrawal-afghanistan?print>

<sup>40</sup> Calvert, "Withdrawal from Conflict," 21.

<sup>41</sup> Grau, "Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos," 257.

<sup>42</sup> Steele, "A Tale of Two Retreats," 309.

However, the ceasefire was short lived and was broken by the Soviets at the request of the DRA president, Najibullah.

The Soviets were not the only forces to arrange cease fires or negotiate with the mujahedeen or local militias. The DRA government brokered agreements with many of the same factions, particularly after the withdrawal was completed. Ultimately, the Soviets' withdrawal from Afghanistan was systematic and aimed to provide humanitarian, political and military support. Grau argues:

When the Soviets left Afghanistan in 1989, they did so in a coordinated, deliberate, professional manner, leaving behind a functioning government, an improved military and an advisory and economic effort insuring the continued viability of the government. The withdrawal was based on a coordinated diplomatic, economic and military plan permitting Soviet forces to withdraw in good order and the Afghan government to survive.<sup>43</sup>

Despite these efforts, the shock of the collapse of the Soviet Union ended support for the Najibullah regime.

### **C. 1989–1992 SOVIET WITHDRAWAL TO SOVIET COLLAPSE**

The Soviet-installed Afghan government did not collapse immediately after the Soviet withdrawal, surviving for over three more years. Soviet efforts to prepare and train the Afghan security forces, along with reforms by the NRP, continued Soviet economic and military assistance, lack of unity within the opposition mujahedeen, and Najibullah's ability to manipulate and exploit divisions within the opposition were a few of the factors that contributed to the short-term survival of the regime. However, it was the same dependency on Soviet economic assistance and the use of the military that ultimately undermined the regime.

On the political front, Najibullah tried to capitalize on the Soviet withdrawal to claim that Afghanistan was a self-governing nation. In a televised meeting with tribal leaders shortly after Soviet withdrawal, Najibullah stated, "We only took help from one infidel [Russia]. The other side has taken help from several infidels [United States,

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<sup>43</sup> Grau, "Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos," 235.

Britain, and China].”<sup>44</sup> Najibullah’s claims were able to persuade some local fighters that the jihad was no longer necessary and were able to financially persuade others to stop fighting.<sup>45</sup> Many of the mujahedeen had gone home after the Soviet withdrawal and Najibullah hired other mujahedeen to help guard the Afghan military’s lines of communication and facilities.<sup>46</sup> Najibullah paid others not to fight.<sup>47</sup> Initially, Najibullah successfully capitalized on the collapse of Soviet support and divisions within the mujahedeen to create an unstable peace in the country. However, not all factions were ready to lay down their arms.

When the Soviets withdrew in 1989, the Afghan military consisted of 329,000 men, 1,568 tanks, 828 armored personnel carriers, over 4,880 artillery pieces, and 140 mixed rotary and fixed wing aircraft.<sup>48</sup> Moscow also had left behind about 300 advisers, and the Kabul regime had the support of a 10,000 strong presidential guard and various militias, including General Dostum’s 53<sup>rd</sup> division.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the Soviets had signed over a battalion of SCUD missiles that carried over 2,000 pounds of explosives and could be fired up to 600 kilometers.<sup>50</sup> The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reported that Afghanistan was the fifth largest importer of arms from 1986–1990, and that number does not include weapons provided to the resistance.<sup>51</sup>

The first real test for the Afghan military occurred at the battle of Jalalabad between March and May 1989. The local garrison, supported by 100–120 daily close air support sorties and SCUD missiles, successfully repelled an attack of nearly 10,000 mujahedeen.<sup>52</sup> The battle resulted in an estimated 3,000 mujahedeen casualties, in

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<sup>44</sup> Steele, “A Tale of Two Retreats,” 312.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 313.

<sup>46</sup> Grau, “Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos,” 259.

<sup>47</sup> Katz, “Lessons of the Soviet Withdrawal.”

<sup>48</sup> Marshall, *Phased Withdrawal*, 6.

<sup>49</sup> Katz, “Lessons of the Soviet Withdrawal.”

<sup>50</sup> Grau, “Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos,” 252.

<sup>51</sup> Anders Fänge, “Afghanistan after April 1992: A Struggle for State and Ethnicity,” *Central Asian Survey* 14, no. 1 (March 1995): 22.

<sup>52</sup> Marshall, *Phased Withdrawal*, 7.

addition to increasing the Afghan army's morale.<sup>53</sup> The mujahedeen further lost credibility when they executed 70 captured Afghan soldiers and made the army more determined to resist.<sup>54</sup> The victory, along with this atrocity, gave the Najibullah regime a much needed boost of legitimacy.

The first sign that the Afghan military could successfully conduct a large-scale offensive operation occurred in April of 1990. The Afghan government had decided to seize the heavily fortified mujahedeen stronghold of Paghman, which had been a safe haven for the mujahedeen since 1985 and was reinforced with numerous obstacles and weapon systems. The fighting lasted over two months, and General Dostum's 53<sup>rd</sup> Division led the critical second wave of fighting supported by tanks, 3,300 aerial bombs, and 66,000 shells.<sup>55</sup> Ultimately, Afghan government forces suffered 51 dead and 330 wounded to 440 mujahedeen dead and 1,000 wounded.<sup>56</sup>

These military victories, however, were overshadowed by rebellion, secret alliances, and failures in the NRP. In March 1990, the Defense Minister, General Tanai, and other Khalq officers joined the mujahedeen leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in a coup d'état, nearly killing Najibullah on March 6, 1990.<sup>57</sup> In response, Najibullah abolished the Defense Council, abandoned the structure of the Higher Command Staff, and began appointing his own factions to power, the very thing the Soviet advisers had tried to prevent.<sup>58</sup> Desertion within the Afghan military rose by 60 percent in 1991 from the previous year due to food shortages, lack of logistical support, and months of unpaid wages in many units.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>54</sup> Steele, "A Tale of Two Retreats," 313.

<sup>55</sup> Marshall, *Phased Withdrawal*, 7.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

Ethnic tensions developed due to Najibullah's policy of appointing fellow Pashtuns in positions of influence in the government, militias, and the military. One of Najibullah's most critical miscalculations was his attempt to exert Pashtun control over northern troops and militias. In February 1992, Najibullah tried to replace the Tajik General Abdul Momin with a Pashtun and reduce the influence of Uzbek militia leader Rashid Dostum.<sup>60</sup> The attempt failed and both men revolted and formed an alliance with the Tajik anti-Soviet mujahedeen commander, Ahmed Shah Massoud. Political coalitions shifted from Islam versus communism to Pashtun versus non-Pashtun ideologies.<sup>61</sup>

Economic conditions, which had been in continual decline since the Soviet withdrawal, also undermined the Afghan government.<sup>62</sup> Afghanistan's only export, natural gas, had deteriorated since 1984 and dried out by 1989.<sup>63</sup> Between 1988 and 1990, the Kabul government doubled the amount of printed currency in circulation in order to meet its obligations.<sup>64</sup> Lack of fuel led to the air force being grounded in January 1992.<sup>65</sup> These economic hardships were compounded by Boris Yeltsin's 1991 decision to end "direct financial and material support to Najibullah."<sup>66</sup> Yeltsin's decision also meant that Moscow would not meet its annual commitment to supply 230,000 tons of food to Afghanistan, which further exacerbated by a poor wheat harvest.<sup>67</sup>

The Afghan government had mixed results with the various militias who had become the primary recipients of the NRP. General Dostum's Uzbek militia had fought bravely in several battles and others were entrusted with providing security; from 1989-1990, over three-quarters of the forces guarding Herat and Shindand in the north were

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<sup>60</sup> "Realignment in Central Asia," *Strategic Survey* 93, no. 1 (January 1992): 176, doi:10.1080/04597239208460915

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Marshall, *Phased Withdrawal*, 8.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.



tribal militias and not Afghan government soldiers.<sup>68</sup> The Afghan government had become dependent on the militias to provide security. As the dependence on the militias grew, the government felt compelled to meet their demands for sophisticated weaponry, including tanks, armored personnel carriers, rocket batteries, and heavy guns.<sup>69</sup> The increased economic and material assistance from the government empowered the militias to act above the law as they engaged in various crimes and increased their political clout.<sup>70</sup> Two months after Dostum's defection, non-Pashtun forces from the north and Pashtun forces from the south rushed to capture Kabul.<sup>71</sup> The mujahedeen victory was the beginning of a new chapter in the Afghan civil war.

#### **D. SOVIET COLLAPSE**

In April 1992—almost four months after Soviet economic assistance stopped—the mujahedeen succeeded in toppling the Najibullah government and creating an Islamic State of Afghanistan. The new political leaders were Hezb-e Islami under Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Jamiat-e Islami under Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Massoud (both ethnic Tajiks), along with Rashid Dostum's Jumbish-e Milli, Rasul Sayaf's Ittehad-e Islami, and Shi'ite Hezb-e Wahdat.<sup>72</sup> Initially the official government was comprised of Rabbani's Jamiat-e Islami supported by the Tajik Massoud and secular Uzbek Dostum. The opposition consisted of Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami, who advocated for Pashtun supremacy.<sup>73</sup> However, each of these parties' policies varied according to their own personal interests to include ethnic, tribal, and linguistic affiliations; the areas in which each of the parties held influence; and each party's perception of what powers the new Islamic state would have. The inability or unwillingness of these groups to unite left the new government weak and ineffective.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Katz, "Lessons of the Soviet Withdrawal."

<sup>72</sup> Fänge, "Afghanistan after April 1992," 18.

<sup>73</sup> "Mixed Fortunes in Central Asia," *Strategic Survey* 94, no. 1 (January 1993): 192–193, doi:10.1080/04597239308460950.

## E. RISE OF THE TALIBAN AND AL QAEDA

Alongside the rise of mujahedeen forces in Afghanistan, a band of Sunni Pashtuns that came largely from refugee camps on the Afghan-Pakistan border emerged that later became known as the Taliban.<sup>74</sup> The Taliban's promise of restoring order and security was appealing in the presence of a complete social breakdown and lawlessness.<sup>75</sup> The disorder and violence that occurred as the major factions battled for power presented an opportunity for the Taliban to emerge as a legitimate and capable force to bring stability to Afghanistan.

In November 1994, the Taliban seized Kandahar, expanded their power base, and gained additional followers. The Taliban leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, donned the sacred cloak of the Prophet Muhammad and decreed that he was the "Leader of the Faithful."<sup>76</sup> In February 1995, the Taliban forced Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami to flee their stronghold in Charasyab, 25 kilometers south of Kabul, leaving their robust arsenal behind.<sup>77</sup> The Taliban now had a large cache of weapons, gained new recruits through their victory, and had a stronghold near Kabul. In 1996, the Taliban forced the non-Pashtun Rabbani government to flee Kabul and by 1997 they controlled 95 percent of the country.<sup>78</sup> The remaining resistance was comprised of mainly non-Pashtuns including the Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras that formed the anti-Taliban coalition known as the Northern Alliance.

The Taliban forged alliances with other powerful groups. One of the most prominent non-Pashtun groups was Osama Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda. Osama Bin Laden was an Arab from Saudi Arabia and had fought alongside some of the mujahedeen against the

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<sup>74</sup> Shahid Afsar, Chris Samples, and Thomas Wood, *The Taliban: An Organizational Analysis* (Hurlburt Field, FL: Joint Special Operations University, 2008), 59–60, DTIC Online, <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA485136>

<sup>75</sup> Todd B. Ebert, "The Taliban and Islamic Fundamentalism in Central Asia" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2009), 42, <https://calhoun.nps.edu/public/handle/10945/10944>

<sup>76</sup> Afsar, Samples, and Wood, *The Taliban*, 60.

<sup>77</sup> Peter R. Blood, ed. *Afghanistan: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1997), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/aftoc.html>

<sup>78</sup> Afsar, Samples, and Wood, *The Taliban*, 60.

Soviets. Bin Laden and his supporters returned in May of 1996 after being expelled from Sudan. Bin Laden had a global agenda, whereas the Taliban were more focused on Afghanistan; the competing agendas often put the two at odds. Researcher Matt Waldman states, “The Taliban did not invite Osama bin Laden to Afghanistan, and its relationship with the terrorist group was strained, influenced by Pakistan and highly dependent on personal relations between the group’s respective leaders.”<sup>79</sup> Despite this uneasy alliance, Al Qaeda reinforced the Taliban de facto governance of Afghanistan.

Another group that trained and ultimately aligned with both the Taliban and Al Qaeda was the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). In the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse, revivalist mullahs and imams formed groups in conjunction with Afghan war veterans and martial arts clubs to protect neighborhoods as a response to the breakdown of social order and rise of crime from the collapse.<sup>80</sup> One such group, the Adolat party, which is Islamically based, wanted more than just to restore order. Its leaders, Tohir Yo’ldosh and Juma Namangan, demanded that Karimov annul the parliament and create an Islamist government.<sup>81</sup> The members were eventually forced out of Uzbekistan in 1992 and fought alongside the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) in the Tajik civil war. The IMU had originally sought safe haven among Massoud’s elements. However, around 1998-1999 the Uzbek government pressed Tajikistan to exile the IMU and put pressure on Massoud not to harbor them. Namangan of the IMU later formed a loose alliance with Mullah Omar and Osama Bin Laden that provided the IMU sanctuary in exchange for fighting against the Northern Alliance.<sup>82</sup> This alliance resulted in transnational ties across borders with Afghanistan’s Central Asian neighbors.

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<sup>79</sup> Matt Waldman, “Strategic Empathy,” New America Foundation, April 2014, 2, [http://newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/Waldman%20Strategic%20Empathy\\_2.pdf](http://newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/Waldman%20Strategic%20Empathy_2.pdf)

<sup>80</sup> Noah Tucker, “Violent Extremism and Insurgency in Uzbekistan: A Risk Assessment (USAID),” academia.edu, August 14, 2013, 2–3, [https://www.academia.edu/6992482/Violent\\_Extremism\\_and\\_Insurgency\\_in\\_Uzbekistan\\_A\\_Risk\\_Assessment\\_USAID\\_](https://www.academia.edu/6992482/Violent_Extremism_and_Insurgency_in_Uzbekistan_A_Risk_Assessment_USAID_)

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>82</sup> “Central Asia and Afghanistan: A Tumultuous History,” Stratfor Global Intelligence, September 24, 2013, <http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/central-asia-and-afghanistan-tumultuous-history>

The collapse of the Afghan government and the chaos that ensued were not confined within Afghanistan's borders. Many Afghans were internally displaced as they sought to escape the fighting, and hundreds of thousands became refugees in bordering countries. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that by September 10, 2001, there were an estimated 3,623,000 Afghan refugees: 2,000,000 in Pakistan, 1,482,000 in Iran, 800 in Uzbekistan, 15,400 in Tajikistan, and 8,300 in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>83</sup>

Coinciding with Afghanistan's mass population migration was the rise of Islamic extremism in the country. The Taliban permitted several Islamic extremists groups, such as Al Qaeda and the IMU, to train and recruit within Afghanistan. The creation of a terrorist safe haven in Afghanistan affected regional and international security, eventually culminating with the September 11 attacks against the United States.

## **F. RISE OF THE DRUG TRADE**

Afghanistan has been one of the world's leading producers of opium since 1992.<sup>84</sup> Afghanistan's percentage of world-wide opium production has increased from 20 percent in 1980 to 70 percent in 2000, and has remained at over 90 percent since 2006.<sup>85</sup> The significant rise in opium production coincides with over 30 years of war, devastated infrastructure, and dismal economic conditions, all of which have made Afghanistan one of the poorest countries in the world. High rates of poverty combined with degraded infrastructure, the relative ease of poppy cultivation (the poppy is a resilient plant that requires less water than wheat), and the lucrativeness of the drug trade have increased the appeal of poppy production. Furthermore, the opium poppy has significantly longer

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<sup>83</sup> "UNHCR Afghan Refugee Statistics 10 Sep 2001," ReliefWeb, September 10, 2001, <http://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/unhcr-afghan-refugee-statistics-10-sep-2001>

<sup>84</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *World Drug Report 2010* (New York: United Nations Publishing, 2010), 43, [http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=HB9PuEhHahQC&oi=fnd&pg=PA29&dq=%22for+Policy+Analysis+and+Public%22+%22The+global+heroin%22+%22and+Scientific%22+%22The+%E2%80%98Balkan+route%E2%80%99+from+Afghanistan+to+West+and+Central%22+%222010+World+Drug+Report+also+benefited%22+&ots=tICrNiyMtL&sig=xrITnpu5cz1556vkk6tOcZU\\_Xc0](http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=HB9PuEhHahQC&oi=fnd&pg=PA29&dq=%22for+Policy+Analysis+and+Public%22+%22The+global+heroin%22+%22and+Scientific%22+%22The+%E2%80%98Balkan+route%E2%80%99+from+Afghanistan+to+West+and+Central%22+%222010+World+Drug+Report+also+benefited%22+&ots=tICrNiyMtL&sig=xrITnpu5cz1556vkk6tOcZU_Xc0)

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

growing and harvesting times, making it more labor intensive than other crops, thus necessitating the employment of more people.<sup>86</sup> For many Afghans, growing poppy is one of the few means for providing a viable income for their survival.

Afghan opium production predates the rise of warlords and the Taliban, but the drug trade reached new and ever increasing heights with their emergence. In 1980, Afghanistan produced 200 metric tons of opium, but by 1983 this number had grown to 575 metric tons after several resistance leaders began encouraging local populations to grow poppies.<sup>87</sup> There are a few reasons besides financial gain that prompted various groups to encourage poppy cultivation. First, the profits from poppy opium could be used for military purposes. Drug profits enabled groups to upgrade their arsenals, pay salaries to fighters, and decrease their dependency on external sponsors.<sup>88</sup> Second, poppy cultivation increased legitimacy and popular support among the local populace. Set against the poor economic conditions of Afghanistan, groups were able to use opium revenues to provide goods and services to the local communities such as clinics and schools.<sup>89</sup>

In late 1994 and early 1995, the Taliban seized Helmand and banned the cultivation of marijuana and opium, resulting in a one-third drop in opium production between 1994 and 1995.<sup>90</sup> However, the Taliban's efforts to end poppy production threatened their popular legitimacy and support among the local populace. This loss in legitimacy forced the Taliban to lift its ban on cultivation in 1996.<sup>91</sup> Following this shift in policy, the Taliban was able to consolidate its control over the majority of Afghanistan even though it did not reverse any of its other unpopular policies.<sup>92</sup> In 2013, Afghanistan

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<sup>86</sup> Vanda Felbab-Brown, *Shooting Up: Counterinsurgency and the War on Drugs* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2010), 127.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>88</sup> Felbab-Brown, *Shooting Up*, 118.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 124–125.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 127–128.

produced over 5,500 metric tons of opium with a farm gate value of over \$950 million dollars.<sup>93</sup> The exact amount the Taliban has received over the years from the drug trade is not certain, but the revenue has probably been significant because they have been involved in all aspects of the drug trade from taxing farmers and traffickers to growing it themselves. From the 1990s to the present, drug trade revenue has allowed the Taliban to fund their insurgency and appease the local populace.

Afghanistan's neighbors are directly impacted by the production and trafficking of narcotics. In 2010, the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) estimated that drug traffickers in Central Asia made a net profit of \$1.4 billion transiting opiates.<sup>94</sup> Over a quarter of all opiates trafficked from Afghanistan passes through Central Asia with 85 percent transiting Tajikistan and about 10 percent crossing through Uzbekistan.<sup>95</sup> Kyrgyzstan does not share a border with Afghanistan, but due to its borders with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, it is the preferred route as drugs pass from those countries on to other destinations. It is estimated that 70–75 tons of heroin reached Kazakhstan via Kyrgyzstan in 2010.<sup>96</sup>

The volume of drugs continues to increase, but the volume of seizures has continued to decline overall in Central Asia. In 2010, heroin seizures dropped by 25 percent and opium seizures dropped by 36 percent.<sup>97</sup> This trend is worrisome for several reasons, but of particular concern are the possible connections between organized crime

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<sup>93</sup> Farm gate values are defined as the price received by the farmer before any subsequent processing. Matrix Knowledge Group, "The Illicit Drug Trade in the United Kingdom," National Archives, 2007, 18, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110220105210/rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs07/rdsolr2007.pdf>, "Afghanistan Opium Crop Cultivation Rises a Record 36 per Cent, Production up 49 per Cent," UNODC, November 13, 2013, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2013/November/afghanistan-opium-crop-cultivation-rises-a-record-36-per-cent-opium-production-up-49-per-cent.html>

<sup>94</sup> *Opiate Flows through Northern Afghanistan and Central Asia: A Threat Assessment*, UNODC, May 20, 2012, 15, [http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Afghanistan\\_northern\\_route\\_2012\\_web.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Afghanistan_northern_route_2012_web.pdf)

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 45–46.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 46.

rings and state power institutions. Of particular concern is the fact that no major drug kingpin has been arrested in Central Asia since regional independence in 1991.<sup>98</sup>

## **G. CONCLUSION**

This outline of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, followed by the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991 and Afghanistan's subsequent loss of financial, diplomatic and military support provides the following conclusions. First, Afghan security forces were sufficiently trained, manned, equipped, and did not collapse when the Soviet withdrew. These forces continued to be viable until the Soviet funding, advising and military aid ceased when the Soviet Union collapsed. This observation suggests that funding, equipping and advising Afghan troops was paramount for their survival in the wake of the war.

Second, the security situation improved initially following the Soviet withdrawal because many resistance fighters ceased operations against the Afghan military when Soviet troops withdrew, most likely because the withdrawal of their foreign backers eased tensions between Afghan forces and the militias. Furthermore, Soviet funding helped pay for militia support of the government, which reduced fighting. However, the security condition began to rapidly disintegrate when Soviet economic and military assistance stopped in 1992, following the Soviet Union's collapse. Many of the government security forces and hired militias quit supporting the Afghan government and either joined one of the mujahedeen factions or aligned themselves with warlords when the Afghan government could no longer pay their salaries. This observation, like the first point, emphasizes that financial aid to the Afghan government was essential for maintaining both its security forces and reducing threats posed by the militias.

Third, the Afghan government continued to function after Soviet withdrawal in 1989—albeit in deteriorating state—but quickly collapsed after Soviet military, humanitarian, and economic assistance stopped. Between 1989 and 1991, the Afghan government was unable to develop a sustainable economy and the loss of finances

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 86.

amplified the flawed ethnic reconciliation and integration policies that never took root. Following the collapse of the Najibullah government, the power struggle that occurred among the country collapsed into lawlessness and in fighting among warlords. The Taliban came to power as a result of this power vacuum and the population initially welcomed their arrival as a legitimate authority that restored order. This observation suggests that the costs associated with the collapse of the central government are disorder and the potential for groups that can provide security—at any cost—to step in and assume authority. As with security in post-Soviet war Afghanistan, the loss of financial support to the government caused its collapse.

Finally, the loss of Soviet financial support signaled the Afghan economic collapse. With poor infrastructure to support economic development and the lack of opportunity for the average Afghan, the economy quickly became one based primarily on producing narcotics. The majority of Afghans that grew or moved drugs saw it as a viable means of providing for one's family. However, various warlords and armed groups also saw the military applications of funding from narcotics, which helped in recruiting and better equipping their forces. The Taliban's attempt at eradicating poppy production cost them popular support. This observation suggests that the Soviet's and Afghan government's inability to create a viable economy led to insecurity and the rise of the country's narco trafficking, which created further instability in the region and arguably the world.

Chapter III will build on these observations to investigate the effects that the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and its collapse in 1992 had on neighboring Central Asian states.



### **III. THE EFFECTS OF THE SOVIET WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN AND COLLAPSE ON CENTRAL ASIA**

The withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1992 caused significant changes in Central Asia. Five new Central Asian states were created almost overnight while the people of these newly formed countries struggled with their independence. As governance expert David Lewis states,

The five new states that emerged in 1991 from the wreckage of the USSR faced huge challenges.... New leaders of these states had to begin everything from scratch: borders, passports, national flags, a diplomatic service, foreign relations, national armies, and much else. Above all, they had to retain stability in states that suffered from considerable social and ethnic fractures underneath the Soviet façade of unity and homogeneity.<sup>99</sup>

All of the Central Asian states would have to resolve their internal issues with new and inexperienced governments. For Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, these challenges included both domestic problems and regional concerns, especially in the Ferghana Valley, which all three countries share.

This chapter examines two significant events that led to social and political instability in Central Asia. First, it looks briefly at the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and its effects on Central Asia. Second, the chapter investigates the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992 and the various challenges presented by the overnight creation of new states in Central Asia. Of the two regional challenges, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the creation of independent Central Asian States created ethnic and tribal challenges that perpetuated instability. Tajikistan experienced a complete societal and political breakdown, which led to a civil war based on regionalism and ideology. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, while not collapsing into civil war, withstood smaller, violent clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. The Ferghana Valley, in particular, became a tinder box of unrest due to its divisions between the three republics of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

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<sup>99</sup> David Lewis, *The Temptations of Tyranny in Central Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 4.

This examination provides insights into what made these Central Asian states more or less susceptible to instability following the withdrawal of Soviet support. Identifying these vulnerabilities can assist in developing mitigating strategies prior to U.S. and NATO forces withdrawing from Afghanistan in 2014.

The chapter begins by discussing the effects of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and its impact on neighboring Central Asian states. It then describes the effects of the collapse of the Soviet Union on the region and, in particular, how the Soviet collapse affected economic, social, political, and religious dynamics in the region. The chapter then looks specifically at the Ferghana Valley and its unique challenges for social and political stability during this period.

#### **A. THE SOVIET WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN**

The Soviet invasion of and withdrawal from Afghanistan affected Central Asia in several key ways. First, there was the issue of unsecured borders: Tajikistan and Uzbekistan both share borders with Afghanistan. Tajikistan has the larger border at 1300 kilometers, and Uzbekistan has a significantly smaller border of 137 kilometers, but a distance that still presented challenges for border security in the wake of the war.

Second, ethnic groups also affected dynamics in the region. One of the immediate concerns in the wake of the war involved the return of Central Asian mujahedeen fighters to their home states. These fighters became significantly greater threats to stability following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Tajiks and Uzbeks comprised 32 percent of Afghanistan's 17 million inhabitants in 1979 with 4 million and 1.5 million respectively.<sup>100</sup> All Central Asian countries, including Kyrgyzstan, which did not have a co-ethnic affiliation in Afghanistan, participated in the war. Furthermore, the Soviets used reservists and draftees from the Turkestan Military District, adjacent to Afghanistan, to fight the mujahedeen in Afghanistan, involving these groups in the war. Consequently, Muslim draftees from these areas constituted almost 30 percent of the available 18-year

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<sup>100</sup> Jiayi Zhou, "The Muslim Battalions: Soviet Central Asians in the Soviet-Afghan War," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 25, no. 3 (July 2012): 302, doi:10.1080/13518046.2012.705567.

olds.<sup>101</sup> Muslim veterans from the Soviet-Afghanistan war received a special level of respect, which they maintain to this day. Central Asian veterans, for example, are well represented in security services and presidential entourages of both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.<sup>102</sup>

Another effect of the Soviet-Afghan war and the subsequent Soviet withdrawal is that it played a role in promoting radical Islam in Central Asia. Jumaboi Khojayev, (also known by the *nom de guerre* Juma Namangan) was a former Soviet paratrooper in Afghanistan and established the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) at the end of the war, which will be discussed further below.<sup>103</sup> Additionally, a few hundred Central Asian soldiers are estimated to have joined the mujahedeen, and a hand full returned to their homelands with the intention of establishing an Islamic state.<sup>104</sup> Despite these efforts to spread radical Islam, most Central Asians found it hard to identify with their ethnic kinsmen in Afghanistan. For example, Jiayi Zhou's records a post-war interview with an Uzbek veteran, who claims: "How could I feel kinship with them? Our lifestyle was like a fairy tale to them. They were all dumb and poor."<sup>105</sup> Fifty-plus years of Soviet influence, including mass education and literacy as well as the promotion of secularism gave many Central Asians the feeling that they were more advanced and better off than their Afghan brethren. This most likely helped to prevent the spread of radical Islam following the war.

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<sup>101</sup> Alexander Alexiev, *Inside the Soviet Army in Afghanistan* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1988), DTIC Online, 42, <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA213733>

<sup>102</sup> Marlene Laruelle, Peyrouse Sebastien, and Axyonova Vera, *The Afghanistan-Central Asia Relationship: What Role for the EU?* Working Paper 13 (Joensuu, Finland: EUCAM, University of Eastern Finland, 2013), 8, [http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user\\_upload/PDF/Working\\_Papers/EUCAM-WP13-Afghanistan-EN.pdf](http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Working_Papers/EUCAM-WP13-Afghanistan-EN.pdf)

<sup>103</sup> Zhou, "The Muslim Battalions," 325.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

## **B. THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS EFFECTS ON CENTRAL ASIA**

The republics of Central Asia and the country of Afghanistan continued to receive economic, political, and military support from the Soviet Republic even after the withdrawal from Afghanistan. However, once the Soviet Union ceased to exist, so too did the benefits and support of state sponsorship. Each state experienced unique challenges, which are outlined below, following the end of Soviet sponsorship.

### **1. Tajikistan**

Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, Tajikistan had been under Russian rule since its expansion into Central Asia in the nineteenth century. Tajikistan was granted status as an autonomous republic of Uzbekistan in 1924 before receiving full status as a Soviet republic in 1929. At the time of its full independence in 1991, Tajikistan had no experience as an autonomous country, and the only model of governance it had firsthand experience with was Soviet-era political structures with no tradition of national political institutions.<sup>106</sup> As a result, power struggles developed from the beginning of independence. Political parties consisted of neo-Soviet groups, modeled after Soviet style authority, and a collection of opposition forces with only vague ideas of how to establish a new government. Only three major opposition parties were recognized in 1991.<sup>107</sup> However, the opposition parties were given merely token representation, and their ability to govern was never fully realized. Opposition reformists became frustrated with the absence of representation and emboldened with the fall of Afghan President Najibullah in the spring of 1992.<sup>108</sup> Demonstrations in Tajikistan grew to nearly 50,000 people, but the political and economic centers of Kulyab and Khojand refused to accept the reformists. The oppositionists eventually overthrew the president by forcing him to resign at gun point.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Glenn E. Curtis, ed. *Tajikistan: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1996), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/tjtoc.html>

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> "Realignment in Central Asia," *Strategic Survey* 93, no. 1 (January 1992): 180.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

The Tajik political disputes that occurred in 1992 are often erroneously simplified as communist (secular) versus fundamentalists (non-secular). This type of assessment does not take into account the complexity of the Tajik social and political environment at the time. The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) was a major political actor in the late Soviet period and played a crucial role in the civil war.<sup>110</sup> The IRPT insisted they, “had no intention of establishing a theocratic fundamentalist state in Tajikistan, and that they would never strive to impose Islamic ideology and their objectives on the citizens of the country.”<sup>111</sup> Rather, the IRPT wanted to restore the basics of Islam to society and begin the process of bringing Islamic knowledge and Islamic values back into public life.<sup>112</sup>

The sincerity of the IPRT’s claims might be questionable, but it formed alliances with the underrepresented people of Gorno-Badakhshan, Gharm, and the minority Isma’ili Shias, none of whom were radical Islamic fundamentalists. Thus the opposition was composed of “Islamists,” secular reformists, and unorthodox Muslims against the neo-Soviets. The neo-Soviets conveniently categorized all oppositionists as Islamic fundamentalists and received international support in their efforts to curb potential Islamic radicalism.<sup>113</sup> Many of the fears around Islamic activism in Tajikistan were based on developments in Afghanistan and the fear that rising Islamic militancy could spread to other Central Asian States. Regional expert Adeeb Khalid contends that the “struggle was over control of resources and of the mechanisms of power; the conflict was based on the regional networks of power that had emerged in the Soviet era.”<sup>114</sup>

Following the forced change of power in Tajikistan, a civil war ensued. Similar to Afghanistan, the war was multifaceted and involved more than ideological differences; it

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<sup>110</sup> Adeeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 147.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 149.

also included a regional power struggle that dated back nearly a hundred years.<sup>115</sup> Specifically, the economic and political center of Khojand formed an alliance with the Kulyab region after the creation of the Tajik republic in 1924. This alliance ensured the two regions maintained a special status while minimizing the influence of other regions in the country. The civil war reinvigorated this alliance. The war itself, however, was precipitated by more than just regional differences; ideology also played a role. Lewis contends,

Much of the animosity was based on regional differences: southern Kulobis fought against eastern Gharmis, bringing to life tensions that had been simmering for years. It was not just regional animosity that sparked the violence, but also a clash between more secular ex-Communist leaders, new political groups that promoted an Islamist ideology, and a small intelligentsia seeking democratic change.<sup>116</sup>

The underlying tensions and potential for instability in Tajikistan had been present long before they came to a flash point in 1992. However, the disintegration of the Soviet Union served as a catalyst to ignite old feuds.

Economics also played a major role in Tajikistan's descent into civil war. Tajikistan—like Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan—was not prepared for economic independence in 1992. Under the Soviet system, the Tajik economy had been assigned the specified task of supplying raw materials—primarily cotton, aluminum, and a few other materials.<sup>117</sup> Additionally, Tajikistan had to depend on other republics to provide vital materials that were first routed through Moscow. Under the Soviet Union, Tajikistan was the poorest of the Soviet republics and was dependent on subsidies from the Soviet Union's budget to meet the most basic needs of the population. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, living standards rapidly deteriorated when the subsidies stopped and trade and production declined.<sup>118</sup> In 1992, the gross domestic product was approximately half of what it had been in 1990 and in 1991; the state's total revenue was half as large as

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<sup>115</sup> "Realignment in Central Asia," 180.

<sup>116</sup> Lewis, *The Temptations of Tyranny*, 167.

<sup>117</sup> Curtis, *Tajikistan: A Country Study*.

<sup>118</sup> "Realignment in Central Asia," 180.

the state's expenses.<sup>119</sup> Tajikistan's poor state of economic affairs intensified regional tensions and animosities that led to the Tajik civil war.

Another major contributor to Tajikistan's instability was its lack of security forces. Tajikistan did not have an army of its own before the Soviet Union ended. However, the Russian 201<sup>st</sup> Motorized Rifle Division and a unit of Russian Border Guards had been in Tajikistan since the end of the Soviet-Afghan War in 1989. The 201<sup>st</sup> Motorized Rifle Division consisted of about 8,000 soldiers, while the Border Guards numbered 2,000 soldiers.<sup>120</sup> Russian forces were officially neutral in the civil war; however, they played a significant role in deterring reformist assaults that aimed to overthrow political leaders aligned with Moscow.

For the first few months of independence, the Tajik government unsuccessfully attempted to organize a national guard. The effort failed because many reformists feared that a Soviet-minded president would use the military forces as an instrument of repression.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, attempts to develop an internal security force were exacerbated by the country's poor economic conditions. As a result, the fledgling government relied on militias aligned with political groups that were more loyal to regional commanders than the central government.<sup>122</sup>

In 1997, after five years of fighting and the loss of 50,000 to 100,000 lives and another one million displaced, a peace accord between the Tajik government and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) was signed.<sup>123</sup> Author Elena Hay states that the 1997 General Agreement resulted from the combination of several factors:

First, exhaustion had taken its toll on both government and opposition forces in the forms of depleted supplies and financial resources, and

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<sup>119</sup> Curtis, *Tajikistan: A Country Study*.

<sup>120</sup> Matthew Stein, "Assessing the Capabilities of Tajikistan's Military and Security Forces: The 2010–11 Rasht Valley Operations," Foreign Military Studies Office, July 2012, 2, <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Gauging-Tajikistan%27s-Forces.pdf>

<sup>121</sup> Curtis, *Tajikistan: A Country Study*.

<sup>122</sup> Stein, "Assessing the Capabilities," 3.

<sup>123</sup> Curtis, *Tajikistan: A Country Study*.

destruction to the country. Second, was the convergence of Iranian and Russian interests to promote peace while distancing the United States from the peace process and minimizing Taliban, Saudi, or Pakistani involvement in Tajikistan. Third, changes in northern Afghanistan by the military advances of the Taliban undermined the security of the UTO forces in the region. The Taliban were suspicious of the UTO's close links with Iran and its affiliation with predominantly ethnic Uzbek and Tajik political and military leaders in northern Afghanistan. As a result, the UTO armed groups lost their important operational bases in Afghanistan. In addition, Afghan President Rabbani and Commander Massoud became dependent on cooperation with the Tajik government and Russia for arms, administration, fuel, food and routes of re-supply, and consequently ceased their alliance with the UTO.<sup>124</sup>

The peace accord brought about the official end to the civil war, but elements of the UTO continued fighting. In 1999, the UTO disbanded its armed forces after being provided more representatives in governmental positions, along with the integration of UTO fighting forces into the armed forces of Tajikistan.<sup>125</sup>

Politically, Tajikistan was rocked with instability from the very beginning of its independence. A strong, competent central government did not exist at the time of the Soviet Union collapse. Additionally, Tajikistan lacked well-developed structures and institutions to manage political conflict and competition, due in large part to the limited options for political expression allowed under the Soviet Union.<sup>126</sup> Alliances and coalitions were often formed based on different ideologies and the ability to muster militias, but each faction also drew its support from particular regions. As Akiner and Barnes contend, armed conflict developed from the absence of political infrastructure capable of handling the contest for control of the state and the principles upon which the

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<sup>124</sup> Elena R. Hay, "Methodology of the Inter-Tajik Negotiation Process" in *Politics of Compromise: The Tajikistan Peace Process*, ed. Kamoludin Abdullaev, and Catherine Barnes (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001): 39, <http://www.c-r.org/accord-article/methodology-inter-tajik-negotiation-process>

<sup>125</sup> Curtis, *Tajikistan: A Country Study*.

<sup>126</sup> Shirin Akiner, and Catherine Barnes, "Tajik Civil War: Causes and Dynamics" in *Politics of Compromise: The Tajikistan Peace Process*, ed. Kamoludin Abdullaev and Catherine Barnes (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001): 18, <http://www.c-r.org/accord-article/tajik-civil-war-causes-and-dynamics>



new country would be founded: “secular or Islamic, democratic or authoritarian.”<sup>127</sup> The quest for peace depended on international and transnational assistance, greater political inclusion for the disenfranchised, and compromise among all parties involved.

The destructiveness of the Tajik civil war can still be seen in the country today from destroyed buildings and equipment to the psychological and emotional scars from those who witnessed the devastation firsthand. The magnitude of the conflict has potentially created a consensus among many that any peace is better than full war, but for how long? The violence of the civil war was caused by more than just the collapse of the Soviet Union. As Rashid Abdullo states, “it followed from the unresolved confrontation among various political forces in 1990–92 and was a manifestation and aggravation of divisions that already existed within Tajikistani society.”<sup>128</sup> Tajikistan continues to struggle with regional inequalities, underdeveloped civil institutions, a disproportionately strong central government, and lack of a viable outlet for political dialogue. The country is also the poorest of the five central Asian states.

## **2. Uzbekistan**

Uzbekistan, unlike Tajikistan, had the fortune of a leader with experience. Islam Karimov became president of Uzbekistan with the December 1991 referendum granting state independence. Karimov, however, was not a new leader to the country; he had been in power as the First Secretary in Uzbekistan in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) following the Ferghana Valley riots of June 1989.<sup>129</sup> Karimov’s experience as a head of state allowed him to cement factional alliances and play potential opposition groups against one another. Uzbekistan’s transition from the post-Soviet period, therefore, was remarkably more stable than that of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>128</sup> Rashid Abdullo is a researcher with the UN Tajikistan Office for Peacebuilding and served on the staff of UNMOT from 1996 to 2000.

<sup>129</sup> “Central Asia: Shaping New States,” *Strategic Survey* 92, no. 1 (January 1991): 153, doi:10.1080/04597239108460885.

The new Uzbek constitution of 1992 prescribed a secular, multi-party democratic government. Islamic fundamentalism never gained significant traction following the fall of the Soviet Union, despite the large numbers of mosques and religious schools that were built shortly after independence. However, the Uzbek population's increased attention to Islam was more centered on understanding history and culture than political aspirations. Nevertheless, Karimov successfully used the fears of Islamic fundamentalism, visible in Tajikistan and Afghanistan, as justification for his extreme repression of individuals, groups or ideas that challenged the state.

Karimov also managed to co-opt or remove religious leaders who were not in line with his agenda. For example, in 1993, he forced a conservative mufti, a top religious official in the country, out of office and compelled him to leave the country. Karimov appointed a new mufti who undermined the Ferghana Valley clergy while gathering supporters to counter radical and political movements in the area.<sup>130</sup>

Despite having some political advantages that helped stabilize the country, Uzbekistan shared many of the economic hardships of Tajikistan. The economy experienced erratic supplies of necessary resources for industry, increased unemployment, high inflation, shortages of consumer goods, and an overall decline in industrial output.<sup>131</sup> However, Uzbekistan's GDP only fell about 20 percent in the first years of independence, compared to the Central Asian average of 50 percent. Uzbekistan experienced less severe economic hardships because of its focus on cotton production, which provided the country with an exportable commodity and less dependence on foreign trade and imported energy supplies.<sup>132</sup> Uzbekistan also had an abundance of natural resources such as gold, copper, zinc, and uranium, in addition to an abundance of natural gas that it could use domestically and for export.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Keith Martin, "Regional and Religious Politics in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan: Some Preliminary Notes," *Demokratizatsiya* 5, no. 3 (1997): 335, [http://www2.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/demokratizatsiya%20archive/05-03\\_martin.pdf](http://www2.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/demokratizatsiya%20archive/05-03_martin.pdf)

<sup>131</sup> Glenn E. Curtis, ed. *Uzbekistan: A Country Study* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1996), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/uztoc.html>

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

Uzbekistan's relative economic stability did not eradicate all economically-based grievances, however. The Ferghana Valley had long been a large supplier of cotton, oil, and gold, but its residents felt they were receiving an insignificant return on its material production. Perceptions of economic inequalities merged with demands for greater cultural and religious freedom.<sup>134</sup> In 1989, Uzbeks and Turks fought on the Uzbek side of the Ferghana Valley over perceptions of economic inequality with an official death toll of 103 and over 1,000 wounded.<sup>135</sup> Uzbeks believed the Turks enjoyed an economic advantage while many Uzbeks suffered from a high rate of unemployment. Soviet troops were used to stop the violence while the first secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party, Rafik Nishanov, was held accountable for the breakdown and replaced by Karimov. Local elites and Moscow pinned their hopes on Karimov to restore and maintain order.<sup>136</sup> He has continued to use harsh measures and strong rule to justify maintaining stability.

Another manifestation of the desire for change occurred early in Karimov's regime. In November 1991, Karimov visited the city of Namangan in the Ferghana Valley to meet with various officials, but refused to meet with many of the informal representatives including religious leaders before returning to Tashkent.<sup>137</sup> In response to the perceived snub, a group called Adolat (Justice) formed a rally that was serious enough to force Karimov's return the following day. Karimov's return to Namangan was not well received by the local population. He was jostled by the crowd, and the demonstration's organizers rudely "presented their demands which ranged from immediate and concrete to the far-reaching and abstract," including the transformation of the Communist party center in the area into an Islamic center and the establishment of an

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<sup>134</sup> "Central Asia: Shaping New States," 152.

<sup>135</sup> Ryan Eddings, *Coping with Independence: Expanding Factors of Conflict in the Ferghana Valley* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 2003), 15, [http://www.indiana.edu/~workshop/seminars/papers/y673\\_spring\\_2003\\_eddings.pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~workshop/seminars/papers/y673_spring_2003_eddings.pdf)

<sup>136</sup> Anara Tabyshalieva, *The Challenge of Regional Cooperation in Central Asia: Preventing Ethnic Conflict in the Ferghana Valley* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1999), 22, <http://www.usip.org/publications/the-challenge-regional-cooperation-in-central-asia-preventing-ethnic-conflict-in-the>

<sup>137</sup> Khalid, *Islam after Communism*, 140.

Islamic state in Uzbekistan.<sup>138</sup> Karimov calmed the crisis by agreeing to convert the Communist party center into an Islamic center, and to consider the other two demands. However, as soon as he was able to reassert his authority he had the Islamic center closed and had security forces root out all militias in the Ferghana Valley.<sup>139</sup>

Another advantage Uzbekistan held over Tajikistan was that it had a large military force at the time of independence. Uzbekistan inherited the command structure and armament that had been headquartered in Tashkent.<sup>140</sup> The Ministry of Defense Affairs assumed jurisdiction over the former Soviet Turkestan Military District in Tashkent with approximately 60,000 Soviet military troops to include a fighter-bomber regiment, an engineer brigade, and an airborne brigade.<sup>141</sup> The Uzbek security forces were the most powerful in Central Asia and were used to combatting narcotics trafficking, weapons smuggling, and civil unrest within Uzbek borders as well as providing ground forces support to President Imomali Rahmon's neo-Soviets in Tajikistan.<sup>142</sup>

Following the initial years of independence much has remained the same. Most large enterprises are state owned with the majority of wealth being held by a few elites, while almost a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line. Cotton is still the major agricultural export and human rights are trumped by political survival. The most enduring aspect of President Karimov's regime has been the continued and increased use of coercive and repressive tactics to minimize any and all forms of political opposition or political grievances. Memorial, a Moscow-based human rights organization, states "Uzbekistan has jailed 10,000 political prisoners, a number that exceeds political imprisonment in all of the other former Soviet states combined."<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Curtis, *Uzbekistan: A Country Study*.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Curtis, *Uzbekistan: A Country Study*.

<sup>143</sup> Alexander Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 23.

Furthermore, Karimov openly and violently condemns expressions of Islamic worship not condoned or controlled by the state. In April 1998, Karimov addressed the Uzbek parliament concerning the need to register mosques and monitor their practices. Karimov stated, “Such people [Islamic extremists] must be shot in the head. If necessary, I’ll shoot them myself, if you lack the resolve.”<sup>144</sup>

The most shocking display of this oppressive mentality occurred in June 2004, in the town of Andijan in the Ferghana Valley. The Uzbek government arrested 23 pious businessmen, claiming the men were members of an illegal Islamic group called Akramiya. On May 11 2005, their trial ended with all 23 men found guilty; several protestors were arrested. By the following day, the number of demonstrators protesting the verdict numbered between two and three thousand. On the night of May 12, after seizing weapons from a police station and an army barracks, a group of men stormed the prison and freed the 23 men.<sup>145</sup>

Neither the newly freed prisoners nor their liberators fled. Instead, they stayed in Andijan and made a request for President Karimov to visit so they could air their grievances. Instead, Karimov sent more security forces that opened fire on the protesters on the evening of May 13. The Uzbek government claims it killed 187 terrorists or insurgents, while human rights organizations put the number closer to 800 with the majority being innocent civilians.<sup>146</sup> Uzbek authorities also claimed the fighters had been trained by international terrorists and were the first to use force while many in the international community claim the government troops initiated the use of force.<sup>147</sup> After the brutal suppression at Andijan, the Uzbek government stood by its account of events and refused to allow international observers to investigate Andijan. Shortly after this event, the U.S. government withdrew economic assistance to Uzbekistan and closed its military base there.

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<sup>144</sup> Khalid, *Islam after Communism*, 176.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>146</sup> Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules*, 38 – 39.

<sup>147</sup> “Central and South Asia.” *The Military Balance* 105, no. 1 (January 2005): 223, doi:10.1080/04597220500387654.

### 3. Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan was unique among the Central Asian States in regard to the selection of its first president upon independence. Askar Akayev, a physicist, was the country's first president not to have held a high position in the Communist Party.<sup>148</sup> Akayev came to power on the promise of economic and political reforms following the 1990 Osh riots in the Ferghana Valley that exploded after a conflict between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks and required Soviet President Gorbachev to call in the Red Army to stabilize the region.<sup>149</sup> Akayev also capitalized on a failed communist coup in 1991 that further discredited the communists as a legitimate force in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>150</sup>

Kyrgyzstan remained a secular state after independence and decreed that no religion would be recognized as the state religion and that religious organizations could not pursue political goals.<sup>151</sup> There were no recorded Islamic parties seeking political representation in the elections prior to or following independence. Kyrgyz Muslims are only 70 percent of the population, with the remainder being a mix of tribal religions and Russian Orthodox.<sup>152</sup> Despite having a smaller percentage of Muslims than its neighbors, Kyrgyzstan still had a small minority that was agitating for an Islamic government. This minority never gained any significant support or traction and a radical Islamic movement did not take root.

As with the other Central Asian states, economic circumstances also affected Kyrgyzstan's transition to independence. Lewis argues that, "at independence in 1991 the country was not prepared for state-building. It had little industrial infrastructure, with most of the population engaged in agriculture, and some 70 percent of the local budget came from Moscow and then the money disappeared with the dissolution of the

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<sup>148</sup> Glenn E. Curtis, ed. *Kyrgyzstan: A Country Study* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1996), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kgtoc.html>

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> "Central Asia: Shaping New States," 152.

<sup>151</sup> "Kyrgyzstan Constitution (1993/2007)," Ace, October 21, 2007, <http://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/asia/KG/kyrgyzstan-constitution-1993-2007/view?searchterm=russian>

<sup>152</sup> Curtis, *Kyrgyzstan: A Country Study*.

USSR.”<sup>153</sup> Also like other Central Asian states, Kyrgyzstan’s economy suffered because it had been an exporter of raw material to Moscow and imported finished goods, which cost more than the raw material exports. This trade deficit resulted in the Kyrgyz economy plummeting in 1991 and 1992. Retail sales declined by 64 percent in 1991; wholesale prices rose 18 times higher in 1992; and retail prices soared 40 percent in 1992. These were the worst economic statistics in Central Asia.<sup>154</sup> Even with the implementation of new economic reforms, including the privatization of businesses and support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Kyrgyzstan could not stabilize its economy.

Kyrgyzstan leads Central Asia in privatization of all commercial enterprises, but is still heavily reliant on foreign assistance. Eurasianet reported that foreign aid of \$1.2 billion accounted for over 25 percent of Kyrgyzstan’s 2010 gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>155</sup> Gold production has been the largest industrial source of GDP, while agriculture accounts for one-quarter of the GDP and employs one-half of the work force.<sup>156</sup> However, as of 2012, the poverty rate grew to include one-third of the population and remittances from migrant workers increased by 15 percent, \$1.8 billion per annum.<sup>157</sup> While Kyrgyzstan has made advancements in its economic policies since independence, it appears that those economic gains are not being distributed equally.

In addition to economic challenges, Kyrgyzstan also suffers from a lack of political freedom. Jim Nichol, Specialist in Russian and Eurasian Affairs, comments on how the semi-parliament created in 2010 has replaced the one-family rule of former President Bakiyev with a “system of coalition-based corruption, where the country’s major economic, political, and territorial assets are divided among political parties with a

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<sup>153</sup> Lewis, *The Temptations of Tyranny*, 123.

<sup>154</sup> Curtis, *Kyrgyzstan: A Country Study*.

<sup>155</sup> David Trilling, “Kyrgyzstan Seeks 25 Percent of GDP in Aid.” EurasiaNet, July 27, 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61615>

<sup>156</sup> Jim Nichol, *Kyrgyzstan: Recent Developments and US Interests* (CRS Report No. 97-690) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013), 15, <http://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=744063>

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

detrimental impact on their ability to govern the country.”<sup>158</sup> Thus, like its neighbors, Kyrgyzstan also suffered from governmental corruption that contributed and even encouraged much of the criminal activity.

Unlike its neighbors, Kyrgyzstan had a different trajectory regarding its security and military. Specifically, upon independence, Kyrgyzstan showed the least interest of the Central Asian states in forming its own military.<sup>159</sup> Initial efforts to create a Kyrgyz national military never materialized for several reasons, but poor economic conditions and recognized dependency on Russian provided security were the greatest contributors.<sup>160</sup> In June 1992, Kyrgyzstan took control of the remaining units of the former Soviet army of around 15,000 former Soviet soldiers of mixed ethnic and national identities, presenting considerable challenges for creating a Kyrgyz military.<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, the significant majority of the officer corps was largely Russians, who refused to serve in the Kyrgyz military and either repatriated to Russia or deserted.<sup>162</sup> Kyrgyzstan’s inability to develop a strong military did not negatively affect the country’s security. However, the country’s internal security suffered from a lack of forces equipped to deal with a myriad of challenges. Internal security forces, such as the police and border guards, found accomplishing their tasks difficult due to low pay and inadequate resources. From 1991 to 1992, police reported that drug related crimes rose 222 percent with 70 percent of the 44,000 crimes reported being related to drugs.<sup>163</sup>

Kyrgyzstan is the only Central Asian country—barring Tajikistan’s 1991-1992 tumultuous political periods—to have forced an unpopular president out of office and they have done it twice. In 2005, President Akayev was forced to resign and his successor, President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, was pushed out of office on April 6, 2010.

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>159</sup> Susan Clark, *The Central Asian States: Defining Security Priorities and Developing Military Forces* (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analysis, 1993), 8, <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA275270>.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 9–10.

<sup>161</sup> Curtis, *Kyrgyzstan: A Country Study*.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.



While Kyrgyzstan has shown that its people can mobilize to protest and attempt to address grievances, it still has considerable progress to make concerning human rights and the treatment of ethnic minorities.

Kyrgyzstan may not have attained the level of social, political, and economic reform that President Akayev had proposed when he took office, but it has progressed more than Tajikistan or Uzbekistan. The country is still one of the poorest in Central Asia, and its unequal distribution of wealth to a select few could continue to fuel domestic instability. Additionally, the discriminatory treatment of ethnic Uzbeks appears to be more than a perception.

The Ferghana Valley is an area that consists of portions of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. It is the most densely populated area of Central Asia constituting 25 percent of the region's total population (14 million of the 63 million) on five percent of the region's total land area and 1,600 people per square mile compared to 40.8 people per square mile for the rest of the region.<sup>164</sup> The borders that define the area were an intentional design by Stalin's mapmakers in the 1920s, who aimed to prevent any one country from controlling all the resources in the region and challenging the Soviet Union.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, the mapmakers' boundaries did not follow natural geographic formations and did not consider ethnic, clan, or new national identities. This resulted in Tajikistan having a large Uzbek and a smaller Kyrgyz minority with Kyrgyzstan having Uzbek and Tajik minorities while Uzbekistan has a large Tajik and smaller Kyrgyz minority.<sup>166</sup> Consequently, national boundaries were not important considerations for determining access to natural resources such as water and infrastructure development including roads and railways.<sup>167</sup> The impact of these divisions during the Soviet era was minimal since the entire region was subjugated to Moscow and the Soviet military.

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<sup>164</sup> "Central Asia: The Complexities of the Fergana Valley," Stratfor Global Intelligence, October 7, 2013, <http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/central-asia-complexities-fergana-valley>

<sup>165</sup> Nicolas Baker, "The Ferghana Valley: A Soviet Legacy Faced With Climate Change," December 2011, <http://www1.american.edu/ted/ICE/ferghana.html>

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

However, this all changed with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the rise of new national identities, and competition over natural resources. Lewis states that during the Soviet times, the borders held no meaning and people could cross back and forth without difficulty. However, “after independence all the paraphernalia of state sovereignty—passports, visas and customs’ brought latent tensions forward.”<sup>168</sup>

Political, religious and ethnic battles for primacy in the Ferghana Valley are not new. In 1898, a Sufi sheikh incited two thousand followers to attack the Russian barracks in Andijan, killing 22 soldiers as they slept.<sup>169</sup> Violent disputes also occurred in the Ferghana Valley during the Soviet era. In 1989, clashes between Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks occurred as well as clashes between Tajiks and Kyrgyz over water and land access that resulted in 19 wounded and one death.<sup>170</sup> Prior to the fall of the Soviet Union, the most violent clash occurred in June 1990 between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. A dispute over farmland occurred in the Kyrgyz city of Osh when a significant Uzbek minority felt it was underrepresented in local decision making.<sup>171</sup> Soviet troops brought peace to the area, but not before a few hundred people were killed.

Since the Soviet Union collapsed, multiple clashes of varying intensity have occurred in the Ferghana Valley—the most violent being the 2005 crackdown in Andijan and the 2010 Osh conflict. Ethnic tensions between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks exploded in the cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad, both in the Ferghana Valley, from June 10-13, 2010. According to regional expert Nichol, the causes for the fighting included ethnic Kyrgyz’s’ perceptions that Uzbeks controlled commerce, ethnic Uzbeks’ perceptions that they were excluded from the political process, and ousted Bakiyev supporters claiming Uzbeks supported the opposition.<sup>172</sup> The fighting resulted in at least 470 deaths and

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<sup>168</sup> Lewis, *The Temptation of Tyranny*, 5.

<sup>169</sup> Khalid, *Islam after Communism*, 38.

<sup>170</sup> Tabyshalieva, *The Challenge of Regional Cooperation in Central Asia*, 20.

<sup>171</sup> “Central Asia: Tensions Grow in the Fergana Valley,” Stratfor Global Intelligence, October 8, 2013, <http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/central-asia-tensions-grow-fergana-valley>

<sup>172</sup> Nichol, *Kyrgyzstan: Recent Developments*, 6.

nearly 2,000 injuries with Uzbeks comprising three-quarters of those killed.<sup>173</sup> However, many claim the death toll to be much higher since only the dead that were taken to the hospitals were counted. Additionally, nearly 400,000 refugees and internally displaced persons resulted from the fighting with over 3,000 homes and businesses destroyed.

A January 2011 Kyrgyz inquiry reported the violence was due to Uzbek extremists, Bakiyev supporters, and ineptness of interim government officials in handling of the situation. However, a separate report in May 2011 by the Special Representative for Central Asia of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Kimmo Kiljunen, submitted different findings. Kiljunen's findings concluded that the Kyrgyz provisional government failed to provide adequate security and leadership, the Kyrgyz general in charge of Osh security did not use his forces to stop the conflict, thus raising concerns that the military may have been complicit in the violence, and the Commandant of Jalal-Abad did not try to quell violence or adequately investigate and prosecute the offenders.<sup>174</sup> Kiljunen recommended that the government promote better ethnic and gender equality while training security forces to uphold human rights, and that the government establish a reconciliation committee. The Kyrgyz government rejected all findings, declared the report biased, a threat to national security, and declared Kiljunen persona non grata.<sup>175</sup> A 2012 report by the International Crisis Group states, "ethnic Uzbeks made up 77 per cent of those detained and charged for crimes related to the June 2010 violence."<sup>176</sup>

In addition to disputes over political representation and resources, the Ferghana Valley is also suspected of being a potential hotbed of Islamic militancy. The predecessor of the IMU, Adolat, had formed in 1991 in the Namangan district of the Ferghana Valley before being expelled from Uzbekistan in early 1992. The IMU received international attention between 1999 and 2000 with numerous cross border incursions into Uzbekistan

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> *Kyrgyzstan: Widening Ethnic Divisions in the South*, International Crisis Group, March 29, 2012, 2, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/central-asia/kyrgyzstan/222-kyrgyzstan-widening-ethnic-divisions-in-the-south.pdf>

that included the kidnapping of American and Japanese nationals. The IMU's stated goal is to overthrow central Asian regimes through jihad and create a pan-Islamic caliphate. Despite this, the IMU denied any involvement in the February 1999 bombings in Tashkent and additional bombings in Bishkek.<sup>177</sup> Several argue that the threat of the IMU is an effective propaganda device used by both the Rahmon regime in Tajikistan and the Karimov regime in Uzbekistan to further justify their brutally repressive measures. For example, Craig Murray, British Ambassador to Uzbekistan from 2002-2004, argues that the Tashkent attacks in 2004 were orchestrated by the Uzbek security apparatus and not an extremist organization.<sup>178</sup> Additionally, the IMU was essentially destroyed along with one of their leaders and founders, Jumaboi Khojayeov, by U.S. attacks in Afghanistan in 2001.<sup>179</sup> The extent of IMU involvement in regional unrest and their overall capability is debated by many.

### C. CONCLUSION

The investigation of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and its subsequent collapse in 1991 offers the following observations. First, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan did not considerably degrade security in Central Asia because it was still part of the Soviet Union. As such, Central Asia received military, political, and economic guidance and assistance as members of the Soviet Union. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union and loss of sponsorship in 1992 significantly impacted Central Asia and affected security in each country. Uzbekistan was able to capitalize on the large military structure it inherited from the Soviet Union and aggressively impose order, while Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan did not have their own national security forces. Kyrgyzstan survived the transitional period relatively unscathed, but the security vacuum in Tajikistan resulted in a devastating civil war and gave rise to militias, warlords, and

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<sup>177</sup> Noah Tucker, "Violent Extremism and Insurgency in Uzbekistan: A Risk Assessment (USAID)," academia.edu, August 14, 2013, 2-3, [https://www.academia.edu/6992482/Violent\\_Extremism\\_and\\_Insurgency\\_in\\_Uzbekistan\\_A\\_Risk\\_Assessment\\_USAID\\_](https://www.academia.edu/6992482/Violent_Extremism_and_Insurgency_in_Uzbekistan_A_Risk_Assessment_USAID_)

<sup>178</sup> Luke Falkenburg, "On the Brink: The Resurgence of Militant Islam in Central Asia," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24, no. 3 (July 2013): 377, doi:10.1080/09592318.2013.802603.

<sup>179</sup> Lewis, *The Temptations of Tyranny*, 191.

heightened regional, ethnic and religious tensions throughout the country. This observation suggests that, to differing degrees, the absence of sufficient security forces presented a considerable challenge to Central Asian countries following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Second, upon independence, the Central Asian governments were inexperienced and did not know how to function as sovereign states. As the new Central Asian governments struggled with the process of state building, the fall of the Najibullah regime in Afghanistan and the civil war in Tajikistan became powerful reminders of the costs of weakened authority and security. These lessons prompted the leaders of virtually all Central Asian states to focus on regime survival, as opposed to democratic processes or liberties for their populations. Under these conditions, the emergence of any group that could be construed as a challenge to these governments was met with a heavy hand. Violent extremist organizations did exist in Central Asia, but their size and capabilities were greatly exaggerated. This observation suggests that weakened security combined with inexperienced and insecure regimes created oppression within the countries studied.

Third, the Central Asian economies were part of a consolidated economic unit and were centrally planned by the Soviet Union. Following independence, none of the countries were familiar with how to transition to an independent market-based economy. Furthermore, each country suffered because they were no longer being subsidized by or forming a part of the larger Soviet economy. During the Soviet era, Uzbekistan produced the overwhelming majority of cotton for the entire Soviet Union and provided natural gas to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. While Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were both smaller agrarian societies, the Soviet division of labor had them specialize in hydro-power generation and consequently controlling the water flow for downstream Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan would receive water needed for irrigation and provide Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan with natural gas and other resources in a mutually beneficial exchange of goods and services. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the importance of regional interdependence and a lack of cooperation between neighboring states began to affect them all. As the Central Asian countries displayed a lack of regional cooperation, their economies suffered and drug related crimes rose.

Fourth, the social change that occurred as a result of the shift from a Soviet identity to new national identities revealed the attachment to regional, tribal, and clan based identities. These new identities combined with economic inequalities, lack of political representation, and regional differences to create considerable tensions throughout the region. In Tajikistan, these disparities resulted in a brutal civil war. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan had conflicts, but never experienced a civil war. However, the Ferghana Valley—shared by all three countries studied—exhibited several bouts of conflict. Although the Ferghana Valley was historically a religiously conservative area, the conflicts that arose in this area often had more to do with competition for resources and perceived inequalities than religious or ethnic differences.

The next chapter will investigate the region today and consider the condition of these countries as the NATO and U.S. forces plan to withdraw from the region.

## **IV. AFGHANISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA TODAY**

As Chapters II and II have outlined, Afghanistan and Central Asia have been strategically linked to one another geographically, economically, and socially, particularly during the transformative events of the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and its eventual collapse at the end of 1991. This chapter outlines the current political, economic, social and security landscape of Afghanistan and its neighboring Central Asian states. From this discussion, Chapter V will investigate potential trajectories that Afghanistan and Central Asian states may take after 2014, and possible mitigation strategies that the U.S. government and military could take.

### **A. AFGHANISTAN IN 2014**

Afghanistan's political, economic, social, and security environment today, while showing considerable progress over the last decade, still faces significant challenges for stability following U.S. and NATO forces' withdrawal in 2014. In order to discuss possible trajectories after U.S. and NATO withdrawal, it is first necessary to outline current conditions.

First, political stability is crucial for a successful transition as U.S. and NATO forces prepare to withdraw from Afghanistan. The Afghan government's ability to demonstrate its capacity, transparency, and legitimacy to its people is essential for this to occur. However, several aspects of the Afghan government suggest that these goals will be challenging to meet. First, federal and local levels of the Afghan government suffer from corruption related challenges resulting from favoritism, incompetency, weak public administration, organized crime, illicit drugs, and dependency on foreign aid.<sup>180</sup> Transparency International's 2013 Corruption Perception Index ranked Afghanistan 175<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Maria Martini, "Overview of Corruption and Anti-Corruption in Afghanistan," Transparency International, October 20, 2013, 2, [http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/answer/overview\\_of\\_corruption\\_and\\_anti\\_corruption\\_in\\_afghanistan](http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/answer/overview_of_corruption_and_anti_corruption_in_afghanistan)

out of 177 countries assessed.<sup>181</sup> These troubling statistics suggest that Afghanistan is nowhere near meeting the challenges of transparency and legitimacy.

Second, the Afghan government continues to struggle to create a power-sharing arrangement among its various ethnic factions. Article 35 of the Afghan constitution bans political parties based on ethnicity or religious sect, but many of the 56 parties that are registered today are relatively ethnically homogenous.<sup>182</sup> Middle East expert Kenneth Katzman states that every post-Taliban Afghan election has been characterized by “patterns of political affiliation by family, clan, tribe, village, ethnicity, region, and comradeship in past battles [that] often supersede relationships based on ideology or views.”<sup>183</sup>

The 2014 presidential election shows the potential for tailoring political platforms to appeal to as many segments of the population as possible. Presidential candidate Dr. Abdullah Abdullah of the Northern Alliance is recognized politically as a Tajik because he was a top aide to Ahmad Shah Massoud, but due to his mixed heritage (Tajik mother, Pashtun father) he appeals to Tajiks and Pashtuns.<sup>184</sup> Dr. Abdullah chose Mohammad Khan (Pashtun) as a vice presidential running mate and Mohammad Mohaqiq (Hazara) as another vice presidential running mate. The other leading presidential candidate, Ashraf Ghani, (Pashtun) chose Abdul Rashid Dostum (Uzbek) as a vice presidential candidate and Sarwar Danish (Hazara) as another vice presidential running mate.

On September 29, 2014 Ashraf Ghani was sworn in as President of Afghanistan and Dr. Abdullah assumed the newly formed position of Chief Executive of the country. The new unity government concluded a highly contested election marked by allegations of fraud from both President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah. While the power

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<sup>181</sup> “Transparency International—Country Profiles,” Accessed August 25, 2014, [http://www.transparency.org/country/#AFG\\_DataResearch\\_SurveysIndices](http://www.transparency.org/country/#AFG_DataResearch_SurveysIndices)

<sup>182</sup> Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Politics, Elections, and Government Performance* (CRS Report No. RS21922) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014), 5, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=753383>

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.



sharing agreement averted fears of civil war, there are concerns that the new coalition will become mired in power struggles and rivalries between competing interests.<sup>185</sup> The new unity government not only faces potential internal fractures between President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah, but credibility issues brought about by the nature of the power sharing agreement and disappointment of many in the electoral process.<sup>186</sup>

While none of the parties are officially based on ethnicity or sectarianism, it does not mean that historic ethnic factors or informal power structures have disappeared. It is important to note that many of these powerful political figures are influential members in informal power structures and justice systems. Figures such as Rashid Dostum, the powerful Uzbek warlord who supported Najibullah before defecting and aligning with the mujahedeen, can mobilize voters as well as mobilize armed militias.<sup>187</sup> The inclusion of these powerful individuals into positions of official power poses a dilemma. On one side, the inclusion of diverse ethnic, regional, and tribal leaders goes a long way toward advancing reconciliation measures and helps to potentially fill gaps in government provided sectors. On the other, mobilization of armed groups could shift their emphasis from fighting the Taliban to fighting one another, similar to the 1992–1996 civil war.

Third, the Taliban presents its own unique challenge for Afghan stability. Some claim that the Taliban have limited legitimacy and minimal support for their resistance to the government.<sup>188</sup> A November 2013 DOD report asserts that Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) were able to maintain territorial gains won by International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) and “insurgent territorial influence and kinetic capabilities have

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<sup>185</sup> Kay Johnson, “Afghanistan Swears in New Leader amid Dispute, Violence,” Reuters, September 29, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/29/us-afghanistan-politics-idUSKCN0HN0XA20140929>

<sup>186</sup> Sarah Chayes, “New Afghan Government; Same Old Problems,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 22, 2014, <http://carnegieendowment.org/carnegieendowment.org/2014/09/22/new-afghan-government-same-old-problems/hpra>

<sup>187</sup> Katzman, *Afghanistan: Politics, Elections, and Government Performance*, 15.

<sup>188</sup> Brad Fultz, “Cautious Optimism: Comparing the Final Days of the Communist Regime in Afghanistan with America’s Drawdown,” *Small Wars Journal* (2013, June), <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/cautious-optimism>

remained static.”<sup>189</sup> Potentially, the grimmest report comes from the February 2014 Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) that states,

The security environment in Afghanistan will become more challenging after the drawdown of most international forces in 2014, and that the Taliban insurgency will become a greater threat to Afghanistan’s stability in the 2015–2018 timeframe than it is now.<sup>190</sup>

A decisive military victory over the Taliban may be unattainable, but reconciliation between the Taliban and Afghan government may prove to be equally difficult, as it will have ramifications for all sectors of Afghan society. Many minorities, women, intellectuals, and others fear that freedoms granted over the last decade would be reversed if the Taliban were allowed to obtain political appointments or control over territory.<sup>191</sup> Finally, the Taliban’s incentive to negotiate with the Afghan government may be reduced due to revenue from poppy harvests and the security environment, which will be discussed below.<sup>192</sup>

Fourth, Afghanistan’s continued economic development is considered crucial for stability after 2014. Currently, Afghanistan’s economy is not yet stable or sustainable and is dependent on foreign aid. Donor aid accounts for more than 95 percent of Afghanistan’s gross domestic product (GDP), and the Afghan government has requested \$10 billion per year in donated funds until 2025.<sup>193</sup> In 2012, international donors met in Tokyo and constructed the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) that pledged economic support of \$16 billion for development through 2015 with

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<sup>189</sup> Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy* (CRS Report No. RL30588) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014), 24, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=752339>

<sup>190</sup> Jonathan Schroden et al., *Independent Assessment of the Afghan National Security Forces*, Center for Naval Analyses Center for Strategic Studies, 2014, 2, <https://www.cna.org/sites/default/files/research/CNA%20Independent%20Assessment%20of%20the%20ANSF.pdf>

<sup>191</sup> Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance*, 38–39.

<sup>192</sup> Zachary Laub, “The Taliban in Afghanistan,” Council on Foreign Relations, accessed August 26, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/taliban-afghanistan/p10551>

<sup>193</sup> Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance*, 56.

commitments of similar levels until 2017.<sup>194</sup> This assistance relies on the Afghan government to comply with a framework that promotes aid effectiveness, reform, good governance, and inclusive sustained growth.<sup>195</sup> Security and political uncertainty in 2014 led to decreased private investment and slowed economic reforms, but donors have continued to provide economic assistance for the time being.<sup>196</sup> A World Bank report from December 2011 warned that an abrupt cutoff of aid could lead to fiscal implosion, loss of control over the security sector, collapse of political authority, and possible civil war.<sup>197</sup>

Furthermore, nearly eight percent of the Afghan population is considered unemployed while nearly 50 percent is underemployed.<sup>198</sup> Agriculture accounts for over 78 percent of the labor force and provides 20 percent of the national GDP and, as such, is important to economic development and poverty reduction. Nearly nine million Afghans—36 percent—are not able to meet basic nutrition needs and fall below the poverty line.<sup>199</sup>

On a potentially positive note, Afghanistan has significant amounts of mineral reserves and petroleum resources. In 2007, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) released findings that Afghanistan possessed untapped minerals worth over \$1 trillion with finding of 60 million metric tons of copper, 2,200 million metric tons of iron ore, 1.4 million

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<sup>194</sup> *Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: 2014 Article IV Consultation-Staff Report*, International Monetary Fund (IMF Country Report No. 14/128) (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2014), 4, <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2014/cr14128.pdf>

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>197</sup> Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance*, 5.

<sup>198</sup> Working age is 16 and above. Eight percent of unemployed are considered to not have a job at any time of the year for any amount of time. The 50 percent of underemployed work less than 35 hours per week. The World Bank, *Poverty Status in Afghanistan: A Profile Based on National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) 2007/08* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2010), 11, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/AFGHANISTANEXTN/Resources/305984-1264608805475/6739619-1286210806756/AFPovertyReport.pdf>

<sup>199</sup> “The World Factbook: Afghanistan,” Central Intelligence Agency, June 24, 2014, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

metric tons of rare earth elements such as uranium.<sup>200</sup> In addition, Afghanistan has proven reserves of 3.6 billion barrels of oil and 36.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.<sup>201</sup> Afghanistan has the potential for a sustainable economy and energy self-sufficiency, but political and security uncertainties impede significant investment and development of these resources.

Opium poppy production will likely remain a central element in the Afghan economy in the immediate future. In 2013, both the United States and UN estimated that the number of hectares used to cultivate poppy increased from 2012 with a farm gate value of \$950 million, four percent of Afghanistan's GDP.<sup>202</sup> This amount is significant given that foreign aid accounts for over 95 percent of the country's economy. As such, opium production remains Afghanistan's largest industry. The lucrativeness of the drug trade has far ranging ramifications for U.S. policy. Afghanistan narcotic trafficking has reciprocal ties with corrupt government officials at the central, provincial, and district levels; correspondingly, narcotic trafficking has deteriorated security and decreased access to development opportunities.<sup>203</sup>

Fifth, Afghanistan has experienced advances in civil society and human rights since the Taliban regime was defeated in 2001, but these advancements remain uncertain and dependent on political stability in the country. Afghanistan has increasingly become more modernized and urbanized since 2001, but, "political affiliations by family, clan, tribe, village, ethnicity, region, and comradeship in past battles often supersede relationships based on ideology or views."<sup>204</sup> Despite traditional patterns of affiliation,

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<sup>200</sup> "Preliminary Assessment of Non-Fuel Mineral Resources of Afghanistan, 2007," U.S. Geological Survey, 2007, [http://194.244.5.206/documents/1276530809188\\_fs2007-3063%5B1%5D.pdf](http://194.244.5.206/documents/1276530809188_fs2007-3063%5B1%5D.pdf)

<sup>201</sup> Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance*, 70.

<sup>202</sup> Liana Rosen, and Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Drug Trafficking and the 2014 Transition* (CRS Report No. R43540) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014), 3, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=753363>

<sup>203</sup> Rosen and Katzman, *Afghanistan: Drug Trafficking and the 2014 Transition*, 1.

<sup>204</sup> Katzman, *Afghanistan: Politics, Elections, and Government Performance*, 2.

grievances between ethnic groups have generally been confined to the legitimate political process with only sporadic manifestations of clashes or political disputes.<sup>205</sup>

Women and youth remain two of the most underrepresented groups in Afghanistan. There have been significant gains in women's rights in spite of the traditional views and Islamic conservatism of many Afghans. Mandates dictate that half of the president's appointment (17) to the upper house and at least 28 percent (68) of the appointments in the lower house are to be women.<sup>206</sup> Women are also serving in professions that were traditionally male-dominated such as the military, police force, and as judges, and as journalists. Despite these gains, gender discrimination remains prevalent. Of the eight million children that have enrolled in school since the Taliban regime, roughly 3.2 million were girls.<sup>207</sup> The U.N. Girl's Education Initiative reports that the literacy rate for women under 24 years of age is 18 percent compared to 50 percent for boys, and only 13 percent of girls complete primary school compared to 50 percent for boys.<sup>208</sup> Afghanistan has a youth majority with 66 percent of the population under 24 years of age and 42 percent under the age of 14.<sup>209</sup>

Despite the numbers of young people in Afghanistan, their impact in the political process has been limited. The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) finds that the primary factor limiting youth mobilization is an "older generation of leaders' stifling hold on power, whether locally, as commanders control resource flows to a specific district, or nationally, as ethnic party leaders keep young would-be challengers from rising up the

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>207</sup> Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance*, 60.

<sup>208</sup> "United Nations Girls' Education Initiative—Afghanistan," United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, Accessed August 30, 2014, [http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/afghanistan\\_68.html](http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/afghanistan_68.html)

<sup>209</sup> "The World Factbook: Afghanistan," Central Intelligence Agency, June 24, 2014, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

ranks or developing new movements of their own.”<sup>210</sup> Both of these groups have reason to fear that gains that have been made since 2001 will be reversed if a more conservative political regime is installed.

Finally, Afghan security has improved, but remains on shaky ground. Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) took the lead role for security in Afghanistan on June 18, 2013.<sup>211</sup> During 2013, the ANSF led more than 90 percent of all operations and lost only about three percent of approximately 3,000 to 4,000 engagements with Taliban and other insurgents, while not losing any significant amount of territory.<sup>212</sup> These accomplishments have been made possible with an authorized ANSF size of 352,000 and significant economic assistance. The CNA reports that the ANSF will need 373,400 personnel with personnel restructuring to build up logistics and support forces at a cost of \$5-\$6 billion per year from 2015-2018.<sup>213</sup> The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reports the DOD budget request for Afghan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) in FY 2015 is \$4.11 billion with 84 percent going towards salaries, fuel, and maintenance.<sup>214</sup> The budget request for the ASFF is \$3.6 billion less than the FY 14 request, but is not sufficient to sustain the CNA recommendation of 373,400 without significant international donor assistance.<sup>215</sup> On January 29, 2014, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper testified that “the ANSF...will probably maintain control of most major cities as long as external financial support continues.”<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Susanna D. Wing, *Youth Mobilization and Political Constraints in Afghanistan: The Y Factor* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2013), 7, [https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR331\\_Malis\\_Precarious\\_Democracy\\_and\\_the\\_Causes\\_of\\_Conflict.pdf](https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR331_Malis_Precarious_Democracy_and_the_Causes_of_Conflict.pdf)

<sup>211</sup> Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance*, 21.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>213</sup> Schroden. *Independent Assessment of the Afghan National Security Forces*, 31.

<sup>214</sup> John F. Sopko, *Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Quarterly Report to Congress* (Arlington, VA: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2014), 88, <http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2014-07-30qr.pdf>

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance*, 24.

Ethnically, a DOD report notes that the overall ANSF force continues to come into line with the ethnic composition of Afghanistan, with Tajiks and Uzbeks collectively comprising 39.3 percent of the force with the majority of Pashtuns coming from the east.<sup>217</sup> While the ethnic mixture seems to be technically balanced, it does not account for a potential flashpoint. In 2012, conflict expert Vanda Felbab-Brown testified before the House Armed Services Committee on the development of the ANSF and corruption in Afghanistan. Felbab-Brown comments that many soldiers are often not promoted because of ethnic fissures, and patronage networks that reward individuals based on ethnicity or factional alignment could potentially of fracture the ANSF.<sup>218</sup>

## **B. TAJIKISTAN**

In November 2013, Emomali Rahmon was re-elected to another seven-year term as president, a position he had already held for 21 years out of the country's 22 years of independence. In May 2013, businessman and former Industry Minister, Zaid Saidov, was arrested after he and other academics announced that they would form a new opposition party.<sup>219</sup> Rahmon's increased authoritative rule, practice of nepotism and cronyism, and marginalization of any potential political opponents have made succession and stability complicated issues. Rahmon has appointed multiple family members to top post in the Foreign Ministry, including a daughter as the first deputy foreign minister and his 26-year-old son as the chief of the customs service.<sup>220</sup> Even though Rahmon replaced 60 percent of the members of his government since 2013, it is believed that this was a common authoritative tactic preventing the appearance of a strong, potentially popular

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>218</sup> Vanda Felbab-Brown, "Afghan National Security Forces: Afghan Corruption and the Development of an Effective Fighting Force," Brookings Institution, August 2, 2012, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/testimony/2012/08/02-afghanistan-security-felbabbrown>

<sup>219</sup> Jim Nichol, *Tajikistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests* (CRS Report No. 98-594) (Washington, DC: Congressional Report Service, 2013), 2, <http://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=745100>

<sup>220</sup> "Tajik Leader Promotes Family Members in Foreign Ministry," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Tajik Service, May 15, 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/rahmon-reshuffles-foreign-ministry-family-members-promoted/25385884.html>

political rival.<sup>221</sup> While reshuffling political positions, Rahmon had to be mindful of maintaining the balance of traditional elites, allies, and his own dominant clan (Kulobi), or risk destabilizing ramifications such as a coup d'état.<sup>222</sup> Thus, Tajikistan's political future may be secure for the time being, but its longevity is uncertain.

The Tajik government's control and influence continues to be minimal in the eastern Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) and the northern area of the Sughd Province portion of the Ferghana Valley. The GBAO is estimated to have three percent (210,200) of the population and 45 percent of the territory, while the Sughd Province is estimated to have 30 percent (2,349,000) of the population and 18 percent of the territory.<sup>223</sup> Jane's Eurasia analyst, Matthew Clements, states the Tajik government has reduced tensions and influence in the Ferghana Valley by being uninvolved in its affairs because, "there is very little government control outside of Dushanbe. And due to the geographical nature as well, the Ferghana Valley region of Tajikistan, where many of the Uzbeks do reside, is quite literally cut off from the rest of the country by the mountain ranges."<sup>224</sup> Thus, administrative control remains a challenge for Tajikistan.

Economically, Tajikistan remains the poorest country in Central Asia, despite economic gains since the civil war. The CIA World Factbook claims: "Its economy continues to face major challenges, including dependence on remittances from Tajikistanis working in Russia, pervasive corruption, and the major role narcotics trafficking plays in the country's informal economy."<sup>225</sup> Tajikistan's economy reportedly grew by 7.4 percent in 2013, but record high remittances estimated at \$4.1 billion equaled almost

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<sup>221</sup> Alexey Malashenko, and Aziz Niyazi, *The Rahmon Phenomenon: New Challenges for Tajikistan's Long-Standing President*, Carnegie Moscow Center, May 2014, 8, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/rahmon\\_phenomenon.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/rahmon_phenomenon.pdf)

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>223</sup> "Tajikistan: Provinces, Major Cities & Urban Settlements—Statistics & Maps on City Population," accessed September 8, 2014, <http://www.citypopulation.de/Tajikistan.html>

<sup>224</sup> Charles Recknagel, "Ferghana Valley: A Tinderbox for Violence," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, June 17, 2010, [http://www.rferl.org/content/Why\\_Is\\_The\\_Ferghana\\_Valley\\_A\\_Tinderbox\\_For\\_Violence/2074849.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Why_Is_The_Ferghana_Valley_A_Tinderbox_For_Violence/2074849.html)

<sup>225</sup> "The World Factbook: Tajikistan," Central Intelligence Agency, June 20, 2014, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ti.html>



49 percent of the GDP.<sup>226</sup> Russia's Federal Migration Service reported that 1.2 million Tajik citizens were residing in Russia as of October 18, 2013.<sup>227</sup> The official unemployment rate in Tajikistan is 2.5 percent, but the World Bank estimates that unemployment is around 40 percent with slightly over 40 percent living below the poverty line.<sup>228</sup> The World Bank's poverty and inequality database revealed that the top 20 percent of the population accounted for 39.4 percent of the wealth compared to the lowest 20 percent accounting for 8.3 percent.<sup>229</sup>

With such a wide discrepancy in the distribution of wealth, it is not surprising that Tajikistan is instrumental in drug trafficking from Afghanistan. In 2010, 85 percent of the opiates (75–80 tons of heroin and 18–20 tons of opium) valued at a net profit of \$1.4 billion that passed through Central Asia were shipped through Tajikistan.<sup>230</sup> The revenues from narcotic trafficking could explain the country's ongoing construction boom and the lavish vehicles and houses that many public servants own.<sup>231</sup>

Construction of the Roghun hydroelectric dam is a centerpiece of Tajikistan's economic development strategy, but it has increased tensions with its neighbor, Uzbekistan.<sup>232</sup> Tajik authorities have made the Roghun dam a symbol of their national revival ideology and claim the estimated 13.1 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity would exceed domestic consumption and export significant quantities to Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>233</sup> The construction of the Roghun dam is a vital component in the Central Asia-South Asia (CASA-1000) electricity transmission project. The CASA-1000 project

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<sup>226</sup> "Tajikistan Overview," The World Bank, Accessed September 3, 2014, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tajikistan/overview>

<sup>227</sup> Malashenko and Niyazi, *The Rahmon Phenomenon*, 4.

<sup>228</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, *.BTI 2014—Tajikistan Country Report* (Gutersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014), 21–22, <http://www.bti-project.org/reports/country-reports/pse/tjk/index.nc>

<sup>229</sup> "Poverty and Inequality Database—Create Widgets or Advanced Reports and Share," the World Bank, accessed September 9, 2014, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx>

<sup>230</sup> "Opiate Flows through Northern Afghanistan," 70.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Nichol, *Tajikistan: Recent Developments*, 11.

<sup>233</sup> Malashenko and Niyazi, *The Rahmon Phenomenon*, 15.

is one component of the U.S. government's vision of a "New Silk Road" to promote better inter-regional cooperation and economic development among Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan by providing an efficient electrical system.<sup>234</sup> Uzbekistan has opposed construction of the dam on the basis that it would endanger Uzbekistan's agriculture production and damage the environment.<sup>235</sup> Accordingly, Uzbekistan has delayed thousands of railcars and trucks, increased tariffs on railcars and trucks crossing into Tajikistan, restricted gas supplies to Tajikistan, and restricted Turkmen electricity supplies to Tajikistan.<sup>236</sup> The Roghun dam project involves the Amu Darya River and does not directly impact the Ferghana Valley's access to water, but Uzbekistan's increased border restrictions are likely to increase tensions in the area.

Ethnically, Tajiks comprise 80 percent of the population, while Uzbeks account for 15 percent. Sunni Muslims make up 85 percent of the population with Shia Muslims accounting for five percent of the population.<sup>237</sup> Despite the accords that ended the civil war in 1997, Tajikistan continues to have challenges associated with ethnic and clan divides, as well as religious freedoms. Jim Nichol, Specialist in Russian and Eurasian Affairs, states in a congressional report,

President Rahmon increasingly has used rhetoric associated with Hanafi Sunni Islam and Tajik nationalism to define his rule. This rhetoric has alienated ethnic and religious minorities, including ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz and about 200,000 ethnic Pamiris in Mountainous Badakhshan who practice Ismaili Shiism. <sup>238</sup>

The Tajik government plays an aggressive role in shaping how Islam is worshipped due to the importance of religion in social and political spheres. While secular, the government has implemented laws that regulate the conduct of celebrations

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<sup>234</sup> Jim Nichol, *Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests* (CRS Report No. RL33458) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014), 45–46, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=751444>

<sup>235</sup> Nichol, *Tajikistan: Recent Developments*, 11.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>237</sup> "The World Factbook: Tajikistan."

<sup>238</sup> Nichol, *Tajikistan: Recent Developments*, 3.

and rituals and strictly monitor Islamic education and the work of the Muslim clergy.<sup>239</sup> In 2014, the state demonstrated its control over the spiritual and moral realm when it decreed that imam khatibs (leaders of prayer) would become public servants, and when the lower house of parliament declared the Hanafi movement of Sunni Islam as the official state religion.<sup>240</sup> Religion and ethnicity are not the only sources of division in Tajikistan. The practice of favoring or minimizing groups based on their regional affiliation is, perhaps, just as, or more important, to the growing frustration of many.

Regional identification based on the four administrative divisions of Sughd, Khatlon, GBAO, and the Region of Republic Subordination (RRS) remains an important component of Tajik politics, economics, and social life. The power sharing agreement that helped bring an end to the civil war is loosely practiced today, but the top political positions are dominated by those from Sughd and Khatlon—civil war allies. Since winning the presidential election in 2013, Rahmon appointed members from Khatlon to key position including the Committee for National Security, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Finance, Economic Development and Trade, Education, and the First Deputy Prime Minister.<sup>241</sup> Members from the northern Sughd Province occupy the positions of Prime Minister, Ministry of Industry and New Technologies, and speaker of the lower house of parliament.<sup>242</sup> Members from the RRS and GBAO were appointed to positions of lesser influence and in smaller quantities. The practice of over representation of the Sughd and Khatlon sects and under representation of those from GBAO and RRS is similar to the political environment prior to the civil war.

Additionally, competition for dominance of the drug trade between the “narco-barons” in GBAO and criminal groups with links to high places in Dushanbe has created

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<sup>239</sup> Malashenko and Niyazi, *The Rahmon Phenomenon*, 10–11.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

additional tension.<sup>243</sup> Many may be frustrated with the current state of affairs, but the stability that has occurred during the Rahmon regime, compared to the devastating civil war, is better than the uncertainty of change. However, this could change because 53 percent of the Tajik population is under the age of 24, and 33 percent are under the age of 14.<sup>244</sup> In other words, the majority of the population was not born during the civil war and do not have direct memories of its destructiveness; they, therefore, may be more likely to take up arms to fight for greater political, economic and even religious gains.

The operational capabilities of the Tajik military are poor primarily because the military lacks any systematic process for coordinating its forces and views other security forces as rivals rather than allies.<sup>245</sup> Additionally, the military receives less financial support than the border guards, possibly because of the integration of former United Tajik Opposition (UTO) forces and questions of their loyalty.<sup>246</sup> This could explain the way in which the Tajik military handled two significant confrontations since 2010. The first occurred in the Rasht district of the RRS Province after an August 2010 jail break in Dushanbe released 25 men. The operation lasted several months and resulted in 24 of the 25 escapees either being killed or captured, dozens of militants killed, and over 40 people from various security services killed.<sup>247</sup> The second occurred after General Abdullo Nazarov—National Security Chief for GBAO—was killed in GBAO on July 21, 2012. The fighting lasted several days and involved over 3,000 security personnel, resulting in the official acknowledgement of 17 security personnel killed, 23 wounded, 30 “criminals” killed, 41 arrested, and one civilian casualty.<sup>248</sup> Both operations were

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<sup>243</sup> Sebastian Peyrouse, “Battle on Top of the World: Rising Tensions in Tajikistan’s Pamir Region,” The German Marshall Fund of the United States, August 2012, 3, [http://www.gmfus.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files\\_mf/1346248601Peyrouse\\_Tajikistan\\_Aug12.pdf](http://www.gmfus.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files_mf/1346248601Peyrouse_Tajikistan_Aug12.pdf)

<sup>244</sup> “The World Factbook: Tajikistan.”

<sup>245</sup> “Tajikistan Executive Summary,” Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment, March 21, 2014, <https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1303066&Pubabbrev=CIS>

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Stein, “Assessing the Capabilities,” 5–7.

<sup>248</sup> A great deal of uncertainty surrounds the incident as the government suppressed media reporting and blocked all forms of communication; Nichol, *Tajikistan: Recent Developments*, 5.

technically successful, but they should have been due to the employment of large numbers of security forces and the capability of the militants to defend against security forces. In both operations, former warlords and opposition leaders from the civil war that still held considerable influence were either killed or arrested. For example, the 2012 operation in GBAO resulted in the regional Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) leader being arrested and later mysteriously found dead.<sup>249</sup>

Tajik border guards play a key role in protecting the Tajik borders, but these 7,000 to 8,000 border guards are woefully underequipped and trained. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) states,

Border guards can be divided into two groups—the young, low-paid (\$2 per month) and poorly trained conscripts and the officers who are on the whole better paid (\$200–\$400 at mid-rank) and crucially better trained.<sup>250</sup>

In 2011, seizures by the border guards and customs officials decreased significantly, but the border guards still seized over twice the amount narcotics as customs officials.<sup>251</sup> This could be an indication that the majority of the porous border with Afghanistan is being utilized to traffic narcotics and not just the Nizhny-Panj bridge that serves as the main crossing point between the two countries.

The Tajik political environment is stable for the time being despite the government's weak control and influence in areas such as the Rasht Valley, GBAO, and the Ferghana Valley. The Tajik government's attempts to regulate religion, targeting of influential opposition leaders and use of repressive measures have aided in security for the short term. However, continued poor economic conditions in conjunction with a surge in drug trafficking and regional discrimination have increased the domestic security risks and an increase of Islamic militancy is possible. The Tajik government's insistence on constructing large hydro power plants may be in the country's best interest, but it complicates relations with neighbors such as Uzbekistan.

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<sup>249</sup> Nichol, *Tajikistan: Recent Developments*, 6.

<sup>250</sup> *Opiate Flows through Northern Afghanistan*, 60.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*

### C. UZBEKISTAN

Uzbekistan's political stability will be at least partially dependent on identifying a legitimate and competent successor to the current president. Islam Karimov has been the leader of Uzbekistan since 1989 and is the oldest political leader in Central Asia (born in 1938); he is rumored to be in ill-health.<sup>252</sup> It is speculated that Uzbekistan might follow Turkmenistan's course after the death of President Niyazov and ignore constitutional provisions on succession and allow the elite clans to settle on a successor.<sup>253</sup> Eventually, Karimov's reign will come to an end either by his own decision or because he died in office. If Karimov does not appoint a successor, then a peaceful transition will depend on the clans and interest groups reaching a mutually satisfactory agreement.

The Uzbek economy has continued to perform better than Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan with a 2013 estimated GDP over \$55 billion. However, this figure is relative and, as the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) states, "The Uzbek government's economic data are untrustworthy, so that the true state of the economy is hard to ascertain."<sup>254</sup> The GDP figure is also relative because even if the GDP is correct, it would be significantly greater than that of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, but Uzbekistan has a population (28,929,716) three-and-half times greater than Tajikistan and over five times greater than Kyrgyzstan.<sup>255</sup> An area of analysis that could be indicative of the untrustworthiness is the discrepancy on remittance. The Uzbek government claimed that migrant workers remitted \$2.3 billion in 2012, but according to the World Bank, the 2012 remittance amount equaled \$5.7 billion from Russia's Central Bank.<sup>256</sup>

Uzbekistan's economy is also affected by tensions over natural resource competition with its upstream neighbors Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan is the

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<sup>252</sup> Nichol, *Central Asia: Regional Developments*, 39.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Jim Nichol, *Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests* (CRS Report No. RS21238) (Washington, DC: Congressional Report Service, 2013), 8, <http://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=743932>

<sup>255</sup> Numbers were taken from multiple pages in the Central Intelligence Agency; "The World Factbook: Central Asia," Central Intelligence Agency, Accessed September 12, 2014, [https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region\\_cas.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region_cas.html)

<sup>256</sup> Nichol, *Uzbekistan: Recent Developments*, 8.

world's sixth largest cotton producer and relies on irrigation from the Amu Darya River from Tajikistan and the Syr Darya River from Kyrgyzstan.<sup>257</sup> "However, water in Central Asia is not only used for irrigated agriculture, but also for energy production."<sup>258</sup> Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have difficulty providing electricity to their citizens in the winter, so they release more water to generate more electricity, but the increased water often floods areas of Uzbekistan and limits the water available for irrigation during the spring and summer.<sup>259</sup> In response, Uzbekistan often impedes supplies traveling on its rail lines and leverages natural gas exports as bartering mechanisms.

Uzbekistan, like other Central Asian countries, is fractured along geographic, ethnic, and intra-ethnic lines with emphasis on regional affiliation.<sup>260</sup> There are at least seven primary affiliations or "clans," but the Samarkand-Bukhara clan (Karimov's clan) and Tashkent clan are the most influential.<sup>261</sup> The Ferghana clan, despite its large numbers and the economic importance of the valley, has few senior minister positions, and clan members are not recruited for lower-level administration positions.<sup>262</sup> It is the competition for power among the clans and its impact on security that is troublesome. The competitions for power between the three primary clans allegedly resulted in coup attempts, car bombings, and mass arrests and counter arrests, and only eased after the 2005 Andijan massacre.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> "The World Factbook: Uzbekistan," Central Intelligence Agency, June 20, 2014.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uz.html>

<sup>258</sup> Christine Bichsel, "Liquid Challenges: Contested Water in Central Asia," *Sustainable Dev. L. & Pol'y* 12 (2011), 24, [http://heinonlinebackup.com/hol-cgi-bin/get\\_pdf.cgi?handle=hein.journals/sdlp12&section=12](http://heinonlinebackup.com/hol-cgi-bin/get_pdf.cgi?handle=hein.journals/sdlp12&section=12)

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 25–26.

<sup>260</sup> "Uzbekistan's Internal Power Struggle Intensifies," *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, July 17, 2014, <http://www.stratfor.com.libproxy.nps.edu/analysis/uzbekistans-internal-power-struggle-intensifies#axzz3AmdeBMdu>

<sup>261</sup> Alexey Malashenko, "Exploring Uzbekistan's Potential Political Transition," *Carnegie Moscow Center*, July 2014, 13, <http://carnegie.ru/2014/07/16/exploring-uzbekistan-s-potential-political-transition/hg56>

<sup>262</sup> Keith Martin, "Regional and Religious Politics in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan: Some Preliminary Notes," *Demokratizatsiya* 5, no. 3 (1997), 335, [http://www2.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/demokratizatsiya%20archive/05-03\\_martin.pdf](http://www2.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/demokratizatsiya%20archive/05-03_martin.pdf)

<sup>263</sup> "Uzbekistan's Internal Power Struggle Intensifies."

Uzbekistan's military remains stronger and better equipped than militaries of Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan because of the military infrastructure largely inherited from the USSR, but is struggling to modernize its equipment and training practices.<sup>264</sup> Despite the slow modernization transformation, in May 2012, the National Security Council (NSC) assessed,

Uzbekistan's armed forces possess sufficient capabilities to defend the country from any foreign aggressor. The biggest threat, however, emanates from within, with the regime trying to prevent a "colorful" revolution from taking place.<sup>265</sup>

Uzbekistan faces several security threats, both internal and external, but views radical Islam as the greatest danger to the country.<sup>266</sup> The significance of non-state actors has likely been exaggerated by the Karimov regime in order to justify the use of security forces to repress regime opponents.<sup>267</sup>

The oppressive measures of the Karimov regime have effectively silenced most open forms of dissent, but may have in the long term increased the security threats the government fears. Uzbekistan's lack of economic development and dependence on remittance combined with a lack of regional cooperation with its neighbors, especially over water rights, create economic vulnerabilities that can bleed over to the social and political sectors, thus affecting the security situation. Karimov has masterfully and forcefully handled the clans, but it is unknown if a successor can handle the clans as they continue to compete for power.

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<sup>264</sup> Dmitry Gorenburg, *External Support for Central Asian Military and Security Forces*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, January 2014, 10, <http://www.sipri.org/research/security/afghanistan/central-asia-security/publications/SIPRI-OSFno1WP.pdf>

<sup>265</sup> "Uzbekistan: Armed Forces," Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, October 22, 2013, <https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1303126&Pubabbrev=CIS>

<sup>266</sup> Gorenburg, *External Support for Central Asian Military*, 9.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.



#### D. KYRGYZSTAN

In October 2011, Almazbek Atambayev won the Kyrgyz presidential election. The elections were peaceful, but came as a result of the April 2010 overthrow of president Bakiyev and new constitution in June 2010. The new constitution restructured power sharing among the president, prime minister, and the legislature to create a better balance among them.<sup>268</sup> However, new legislative appointments and distribution of power appeared to resuscitate northern dominance over southern interest, intensifying regional tensions.<sup>269</sup> Analyst Johan Engvall describes the new semi-parliament system that replaced the one family rule of former President Bakiyev as a “system of coalition-based corruption, where the country’s major economic, political, and territorial assets are divided among political parties with a detrimental impact on their ability to govern the country.”<sup>270</sup> The new political alignment has not eliminated political volatility, and the last four years have witnessed intense infighting between political groups representing northern and southern interests marked by shifting coalitions and new prime ministers.<sup>271</sup>

Kyrgyzstan remains one of the poorest countries in Central Asia and, in 2013, foreign remittance accounted for 31 percent (est. \$2 billion) of the GDP.<sup>272</sup> Kyrgyzstan’s official unemployment rate is 8.7 percent with a poverty rate of 22 percent. However, the unemployment percentage is likely to be much higher, as the unemployment numbers are reduced by labor migration to Russia and other countries.<sup>273</sup>

Kyrgyzstan’s construction of the large Karmbarata-1 hydro-electric plant has fueled competition of natural resources with its downstream neighbors, especially

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<sup>268</sup> Nichol, *Kyrgyzstan: Recent Developments*, 8.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>271</sup> “Kyrgyzstan’s Domestic Woes Lessen Russia’s Trust,” Stratfor Global Intelligence, March 12, 2014, <http://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical-diary/kyrgyzstans-domestic-woes-lessen-russias-trust>

<sup>272</sup> “Remittances to Developing Countries to Stay Robust This Year, despite Increased Deportations of Migrant Workers, Says WB,” The World Bank, April 11, 2014, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2014/04/11/remittances-developing-countries-deportations-migrant-workers-wb>

<sup>273</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, *BTI 2014—Kyrgyzstan Country Report* (Gutersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014), 16, [http://www.bti-project.de/uploads/tx\\_itao\\_download/BTI\\_2014\\_Kyrgyzstan.pdf](http://www.bti-project.de/uploads/tx_itao_download/BTI_2014_Kyrgyzstan.pdf)

Uzbekistan. The Kambarata-1 dam is planned to be one of the largest dams in the world with a reservoir of 3.7 million acre feet of water and a generating capacity of 1.9 gigawatts.<sup>274</sup> The project could allow Kyrgyzstan to meet its domestic electrical needs in the winter and create a surplus of electricity for exportation.<sup>275</sup> The objections and responses at the state level have been mentioned earlier, but an equally contentious issue over water and energy can occur within states.

The Ferghana Valley is the most hospitable area to irrigated agriculture in Central Asia and accounts for 45 percent of the farmable land within the Syr Darya basin.<sup>276</sup> However, the Ferghana Valley has a history of confrontation over access to water and tense inter-ethnic relations, with a majority of the conflicts occurring between upstream and downstream users due to the gravity fed irrigation systems.<sup>277</sup> The Ferghana Valley and irrigated agriculture serves as a source of livelihood and backbone of the economies of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and of Kyrgyzstan.<sup>278</sup>

Organized crime and drug trafficking are deeply intertwined in Kyrgyz politics, society, and economy. The UNODC estimates that there are 40 organized crime groups, while the Russian Federal Drug Control Service (FDCS) estimates there are 70 organized crime groups throughout the country that engage in activities from racketeering, embezzling state assets, and drug trafficking.<sup>279</sup> The crime groups have won seats in parliament and posts in other government bodies, with the main power brokers being ethnic Kyrgyz based in Osh and Bishkek who control 80 percent of the criminal markets.<sup>280</sup> Ethnic Kyrgyz criminal groups inflamed the 2010 inter-ethnic conflict in Osh, more so than ethnic Uzbek criminal groups.<sup>281</sup> The 2010 contest for dominance

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<sup>274</sup> Nichol, *Kyrgyzstan: Recent Developments*, 17.

<sup>275</sup> Bichsel, "Liquid Challenges," 26.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>279</sup> *Opiate Flows through Northern Afghanistan*, 88.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 88–89.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

between criminal groups demonstrates how criminal elements can impact the economy, political institutions, and the security threat that can develop when their fighting destabilizes large areas.

Four years have passed since the inter-ethnic violence that occurred in southern Kyrgyzstan claimed the lives of over 400 people and displaced another 400,000. Yet, the underlying issues of the conflict, such as poverty and unemployment, unequal distribution of wealth, poor political representation of minorities, corruption, organized crime, and unequal distribution of justice remain.<sup>282</sup> In 2011, Atambayev received many Uzbek votes for his campaign slogan of “Kyrgyzstan is for all,” and in April 2013, Atambayev convened a “Concept on strengthening national unity and inter-ethnic relations in the Kyrgyz Republic,” but few concrete gains have been observed.<sup>283</sup>

The Kyrgyz security forces consist of 7,000 army, 2,400 air force, 5,000 border guard, 3,500 police, and 1,000 National Guard troops.<sup>284</sup> The majority of troops are ethnic Kyrgyz conscripts with the higher command dominated by ethnic Kyrgyz although there are some Russian officers. Females comprise one-third of the military.<sup>285</sup> The armed forces are relatively weak; they contain gaps in command and control, training, and discipline.<sup>286</sup> Currently, the armed forces suffer issues with professionalization as conscripts account for over 70 percent of the army personnel, including 90 percent in units located in the more unstable southern provinces.<sup>287</sup> The armed forces maintain a Soviet era structure and are assessed as unable to conduct effective counter-insurgency

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<sup>282</sup> “Stubborn Facts on the Ground,” *The Economists*, April 20, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21576451-struggle-quieter-two-biggest-blocks-remain-odds-stubborn-facts-ground>

<sup>283</sup> Sufan bin Uzayr, “Kyrgyzstan’s Moment to Move Past Regional and Ethnic Divides and Realize Unity,” *International Policy Digest*, July 5, 2014, <http://www.internationalpolicydigest.org/2014/07/05/kyrgyzstans-moment-move-past-regional-ethnic-divides-realize-unity/>

<sup>284</sup> “Armed Forces, Kyrgyzstan,” Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment, June 5, 2014, 1, <https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1303018&Pubabbrev=CIS>

<sup>285</sup> Nichol, *Kyrgyzstan: Recent Developments*, 19.

<sup>286</sup> Gorenburg, *External Support for Central Asian Military*, 17.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

(COIN) or counter-terrorism operations.<sup>288</sup> The violent events that occurred in Bishkek and Osh in 2010 demonstrated that the military is not able to carry out COIN or violent containment operations, but also that the military may have been directly or indirectly complicit in the violence.<sup>289</sup> These events also demonstrated the northern government's inability to control the monopoly of force and impose its will on southern leaders.

The new Kyrgyz political institution appears more democratic with greater checks and balances between the bodies of government, but its authority has become weaker due to competing personal and regional interests. Criminal organizations have grown stronger and more influential as the government's influence and control have weakened. Organized crime groups have been able to exploit the country's poor economic conditions, ethnic tensions, and security forces' short comings to create political and economic conditions that are favorable for their operations.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Afghan society, government, and security forces continue to mature into forces capable of combatting violent extremist organizations, but they cannot yet do it on their own. The government needs security assistance and finances to pay their forces in order to address the current security threats while buying time to set conditions for long term, sustainable economic infrastructure development. The country has the potential for economic self-sufficiency, but currently requires economic assistance from the international community. Economics, more than ideology, ethnicity, or religion, will likely determine Afghanistan's long-term stability.

The Central Asian states outlined in this chapter, like Afghanistan, face several challenges to state stability. Their governments are authoritative and their over reactions to incidents of violence will likely provide opposition elements with increased anti-

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<sup>288</sup> "Armed Forces, Kyrgyzstan," Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, 2.

<sup>289</sup> Gorenburg, *External Support for Central Asian Military*, 17.

government sentiment. Additionally, the Central Asian governments' unwillingness for regional cooperation hampers economic development and countering narcotics trafficking and violent extremists.

The next chapter will build on these points to compare potential lessons learned from the effects of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and its collapse in 1991 to possible problems that could lead to state collapse in Afghanistan and Central Asia after the U.S. and NATO drawdown in 2014.

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## **V. AFGHANISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA AFTER 2014: APPLYING LESSONS LEARNED FROM SOVIET WITHDRAWAL**

This thesis has hypothesized that valuable lessons can be drawn from analyzing the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and the collapse of the USSR in 1991—which ended financial support to the region and caused political, economic, social and security problems in Central Asia—to the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan in 2014, including possible pitfalls to avoid in the region. To that end, this chapter begins by summarizing key actions taken by the Soviet Union from the 1989–1992 period of transformation. An analysis will then be applied to what is likely to happen to the region once coalition forces withdraw from Afghanistan, and recommendations will be made as to what the United States can do to assist and maintain influence in the region during the transition period. Finally, this chapter will discuss the importance of the United States maintaining a persistent presence in the region and the consequences of disengaging from the region entirely.

### **A. AFGHANISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA: 1989–1992, KEY POINTS**

Summarizing Chapter II, the lessons learned from the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and its collapse in 1991 include the following:

**Politically**, the Soviet Union helped install a government that was sympathetic to its interests prior to withdrawing from Afghanistan in 1989. This government, despite being disjointed and unpopular, was able to stay in power after Soviet military forces withdrew. However, the ethnic rivalries and the persistence of mujahedeen leaders proved too much for the weak government when economic and military assistance ended, following the Soviet collapse in 1991. The government quickly disintegrated in 1992, and the country fell into years of civil war before the Taliban began to consolidate power in 1994. Despite their oppressive tactics and brutal application of Sharia law, the population initially welcomed the Taliban because they were able to bring a measure of stability to the country. In other words, the Afghan government persisted as long as there was

financial and military aid to back it. The collapse of the central government dragged the country into civil war and created the conditions for a brutal regime to assume power.

**Economically**, all sectors of Afghan society were dependent on massive amounts of economic assistance from the Soviet Union. Following the war, the country was unable to develop a self-sufficient or sustainable economy, and when Soviet aid ceased, the economy collapsed. Agriculture quickly became consumed by poppy cultivation, which gave rise to warlords and regional tensions surrounding narcotics trafficking. Industrial infrastructure was virtually non-existent, and harvesting natural resources such as oil and gas ceased. Harvesting and trafficking poppy became one of the only viable means of economic livelihood. Taliban attempts at suppressing opium production proved to be unpopular with the local population. Afghanistan, in other words, was dependent on Soviet aid and did not create a viable economy. The collapse of the economy and rise of narco-trafficking gave rise to warlords and regional tensions.

**Socially**, the Soviet Union's attempt at creating a national reconciliation policy helped stabilize the country in the short term through power-sharing schemes between tribal and ethnic factions. However, ethnic tensions and divisions exploded when financial assistance from the Soviet Union ceased when the USSR dissolved. Pashtun political dominance and perceived political exclusion of other groups, coupled with and economic inequality based on region and ethnic group, also helped drive the country into civil war. The rise of the Taliban, who were ethnically Pashtun, also fueled perceptions that Afghanistan was unable to provide equal treatment for its different ethnic groups. The Soviets, in other words, did not manage to shore up ethnic differences in the country, and these differences became violent when political and economic conditions worsened.

**In terms of security**, Afghan security forces proved to be a competent force capable of handling domestic security concerns on its own after the Soviets withdrew. The Soviets continued to provide significant economic and material assistance to Afghan security forces following the Soviets' departure in 1989. Simultaneously, Soviet efforts to buy off militias as a means of reducing fighting against the government were also successful. However, when Soviet economic assistance stopped, the military no longer had fuel for its jets and could not pay its security forces or the militias. These economic



shortcomings, combined with increased ethnic and tribal tensions, caused many soldiers and militias to defect and contributed to the deteriorated security conditions in the country in 1992. In other words, Afghan security forces had a measure of competence, but the country's many other problems prevented them from being effective.

Afghanistan was not the only country deeply affected by the withdrawal and collapse of the Soviet Union; Central Asia was also transformed. New independent countries developed almost overnight and were not prepared to create their own viable states. This thesis looked at three of the five Central Asian states—Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan—to better understand what Soviet withdrawal and the deterioration of stability in Afghanistan did to these states. The following lessons from Chapter III include:

**Politically**, these Central Asian governments were inexperienced and resorted to the form of governance with which they were familiar, the Soviet model. However, the Soviet model did not provide the tools and resources of state building that these newly independent states required. Furthermore, these newly formed governments were weak and unfamiliar with developing regional cooperation with their neighbors on issues ranging from security—particularly in the Ferghana Valley—to sharing natural resources, such as water. Under these conditions, these Central Asian states resorted to heavy handed governments that were primarily focused on regime survival and saw any opposition as a threat that needed to be confronted through military crackdowns and imprisonment, effectively suppressing civil society and political development.

**Socially**, the region experienced an identity crisis as it transitioned from being part of the Soviet Union to newly independent states. In some cases, new nationalist identities did not correspond with the multi-ethnic composition of these countries. Moreover, latent animosities that existed during the Soviet era became more apparent following Central Asia's independence. In the Ferghana Valley, multiple clashes of varying intensity occurred, but the most violent were the 2005 Uzbek government crackdown in Andijan and the 2010 Osh conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. Ethnic

and regional tensions became especially bad in Tajikistan and, coupled with weak governance and lack of security forces, the country quickly descended into civil war in 1992.

**Economically**, Central Asia was one of the poorest regions in the Soviet Union and declined further with its collapse. The Soviet Union planned the region's economy and routed its industry through Moscow. Furthermore the region depended on Soviet guidance and subsidies to survive. This system collapsed virtually overnight when the Soviet Union dissolved at the end of 1991. The poor economic conditions that followed independence amplified ethnic, regional and other grievances. The rise of narco-trafficking in Afghanistan also affected these countries, particularly Tajikistan, where the majority of narcotics were trafficked before moving on to China, Russia and Europe.

**Security** in the region was also deeply affected by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Soviets continued to enforce security and stability in Central Asia after their withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1991. Security conditions in Central Asia did not deteriorate until the collapse of the Soviet Union forced the newly independent Central Asian countries to provide and enforce security on their own. Some states did better than others. Uzbekistan inherited Soviet security forces, including men and materiel, following the Soviet collapse in 1991, which contributed to stability. Tajikistan, on the other hand, was left with no security forces and quickly spiraled into a civil war largely fought by personal militias and war lords. Kyrgyzstan did not inherit much of a security force infrastructure, but did not experience as much turmoil as Tajikistan.

## **B. AFGHANISTAN POST-2014: POSSIBLE MITIGATION STRATEGIES**

Based on the key takeaway points from the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and the end of its financial support of the fledgling state in 1991, the following are potential causes of collapse and mitigation strategies that the international community and United States could take:

**Politically**, President Ghani's administration faces many of the same challenges as the Najibullah regime did in 1991, including corruption, competing internal political interest, credibility issues, dependence on foreign aid, and combatting violent extremist

organizations. Furthermore, the United States has helped broker an ethnic power-sharing arrangement in Afghanistan not unlike the arrangement the Soviet Union brokered following its withdrawal. In 1989, despite the challenges the Afghan government faced, it did not collapse following the Soviets' withdrawal, but it quickly disintegrated in 1992 when Soviet military and financial aid ceased.

Given this observation, it is imperative that the Afghan government continues to receive economic and military support from the international community; this is what kept the Afghan government aloft from 1989-1991 and will likely keep it viable in the near term. Without this support, the new Afghan government is likely to collapse, just as the Najibullah regime did. Furthermore, the international community, especially the United States, should continue to work with the government of Afghanistan to stabilize its power-sharing and ethnic inclusion in the government moving forward. The United States and the international community should hold the Afghan government accountable if ethnic favoritism begins to take hold, or groups or regions are excluded or favored.

An important part of this strategy is managing the Taliban after 2014. If the Taliban continue to have a popular base of support, excluding them from the political process may alienate key power brokers and portions of society. While some members of the Taliban may never want a seat at the political table and will continue to fight the government, others within the multifaceted network have shown that they are interested in reconciliation and working with the government for change. It is these members of the Taliban that the Afghan government should reach out to and court as a means of reconciliation and reducing threats against the government moving forward.

International actors should also help the government improve its reach beyond Kabul, and provide necessary services to show the population that the government can benefit the average Afghan. The United States has considerable resources that could be used towards this end, including USAID and the Civil Affairs branch in the U.S. military. However, the Afghan people must direct these efforts of extending the reach of the government beyond Kabul. Over a decade of United States and international development in the country has had mixed results because the population has not been included sufficiently in the process.

**Economically**, Afghanistan is also in a similar position to that following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. As then, Afghanistan is utterly dependent on foreign assistance; by some estimates, foreign assistance is at least 90 percent of their GDP, as described in Chapter IV. The Soviets continued to bankroll Afghanistan's economy following their withdrawal in 1989, but did little to actually develop their economy. When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, economic assistance ceased and the economy collapsed.

Given this observation, the international community should continue to provide economic assistance to Afghanistan, but it should be coupled with development of Afghanistan's economy. Afghanistan has the natural resources and potential to develop a sustainable and self-sufficient economy. As described in Chapter IV, Afghanistan is rich in untapped mineral reserves, such as chromium, iron ore, copper, and rare earth elements such as uranium. Furthermore, it is estimated that Afghanistan also has untapped oil and gas reserves. These resources alone, if properly developed, could help create a more viable economy in Afghanistan.

Current security and stability concerns prevent many foreign investors from investing financial capital to develop these industries. Until security conditions improve, foreign investors are unlikely to invest large sums of money into developing these underutilized aspects of Afghanistan's economy. China is investing in Afghanistan's infrastructure with the goal of tapping into its natural resources. It is unclear if China will actually partner with Afghanistan and help develop its economy and infrastructure, or if it will just extract these resources and leave Afghanistan impoverished.

Growing and trafficking narcotics will likely remain a viable form of livelihood until the economy is better developed and worthwhile alternatives to the drug trade are established. Attempts to eradicate narcotic production, under the Taliban, resulted in loss of popular support and caused many to fight against those Taliban officials responsible. Therefore, attacking poppy production without a viable economic alternative is likely to backfire. Continued narcotics production is, therefore, foreseeable into the future, and its production will affect neighboring states, particularly Tajikistan, which will be discussed below.

**Socially**, the Soviets attempted to mitigate ethnic and regional tensions in Afghanistan by creating power-sharing arrangements in the government and developing an ethnically diverse military, as described in Chapter II. These arrangements were only viable as long as the Soviets bankrolled both the government and provided salaries for security forces; when the funds dried up, the small measure of ethnic cooperation the Soviets created quickly fell apart.

Today, tensions and inequalities based on ethnicity, tribal affiliation, and gender still persist. However, the last decade have seen some improvements in civil society building, as described in Chapter IV; many segments of the population are better educated, more modernized, and have access to basic resources. As a result, if the country falls into chaos, the population has more to lose than it did in 1991.

The international community, including particularly non-governmental organizations, should continue to work with different segments of civil society to reinforce and build gains made over the past decade, including opportunities for civil society building that promote cross-cutting ethnic cleavages in society. Coupled with increased pressure for power-sharing in the government and ethnic representation in security forces, these are prolonged engagement strategies that could work to mitigate ethnic and gender differences in the country.

**Militarily**, Afghan security forces were sufficiently trained and well equipped under Soviet sponsorship; they persisted and managed to keep security in the country following Soviet troops' withdrawal in 1989. However, as with other sectors in Afghanistan, the security forces collapsed when the infusions of Soviet money ended 1992.

NATO and U.S. forces have spent considerable time and money training and equipping Afghan security forces, including the Afghan National Army, the Afghan National Police, and Afghan Local Police. There is reason to question the viability of these forces. U.S. efforts to train and equip Iraqi security forces have resulted in the wholesale collapse of troops in the face of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant's advances into Iraq in 2014. However, as the Soviet era suggests, the continuation of

financial support and training may strengthen these forces and make them more capable; the United States did not continue training and advising Iraqi forces after the U.S. withdrawal in 2011.

Furthermore, Afghanistan will likely see some resistance fighters lay down their arms as U.S. and NATO forces withdraw—as they did when the Soviets withdrew in 1989—but increased levels of violence are likely for the next few years, particularly if contests for power occur in different areas of the country. Provided that the international community does not cease economic and military assistance, it is likely the security forces will prove capable of independently defending Afghanistan against domestic threats. Continued international economic assistance will allow the security forces to operate, while providing the Afghan government the time it needs to strengthen its institutions, develop its economy and further stabilize.

In sum, the international community, and the United States in particular, should continue providing financial assistance to all sectors of the Afghan state. This money should be used not only to buy time, as the Soviets did, but also to develop self-sustainability in Afghanistan's economy, to further develop Afghan civil society, to continue strengthening inter-ethnic collaboration, and to improve Afghanistan's security forces. Money, in other words, is not the solution in and of its self; this was the mistake the Soviets made. Rather, money is a tool that can be used to buy time and work towards the goals of stabilization in Afghanistan mentioned above.

### **C. CENTRAL ASIA POST-2014: POSSIBLE MITIGATION STRATEGIES**

Based on the key takeaway points gleaned from the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of its support to Central Asian states, the following are potential causes of collapse and possible mitigation strategies that the international community and United States could take:

**Politically**, the Central Asian states of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan now have over 20 years of experience functioning as independent countries; however, many of the lessons learned have been neither progressive nor productive. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have taken considerable measures aimed at ensuring regime survival,

while Kyrgyzstan, which is more democratic, has attempted to balance out the central government, reducing its ability to govern effectively. The political landscapes for Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan vary, but their shared inability or unwillingness to address the underlying causes of conflict adds to their political uncertainty.

These countries will likely continue to practice measures aimed at ensuring regime survival, including overreaction to any opposition movement and a heavy-handed use of force to tamp down incidents of violence among the population. Disproportionate responses to acts of violence will probably generate additional anti-government sentiment. This trend is particularly likely for these governments' reactions to Islamic movements. Currently Tajikistan is the only country that allows an Islamically based political party to run in elections—the Islamic Renaissance Party—but, despite this, Tajikistan continues to monitor and oppress any group that it sees as a political threat, citing Islamic terrorism as a cause. Transnational organizations like Hisbul-i-Tahrir have been banned in all Central Asian states. These reactions are likely to increase anti-government sentiment and could likely fuel an insurgency down the road.

In terms of succession, each of these countries faces challenges with handing power over while also maintaining a tight grip on the population and managing the political, regional, and business elites. Tajikistan held elections in 2013, in which it reelected President Rahmon to another seven year term. In Tajikistan, the issue of succession is complicated because Rahmon could amend the constitution—as he has done previously—to allow him to run again, but also because Rahmon has used various techniques to quash any potential political rival from becoming a viable popular opponent. In Uzbekistan, the uncertainty of presidential succession resembles Tajikistan, but with two additional elements. Uzbekistan's leader of 25 years, Karimov, is 76 years old and rumored to be in poor health, but there have been no official plans for a successor despite scheduled elections in March 2015. In comparison, Kyrgyzstan does not share the same issues of succession as Tajikistan and Uzbekistan due to its more democratic electoral process, but Kyrgyzstan's political future remains uncertain.

The international community and the United States face limited options for encouraging more democratic practices in these countries while maintaining their

stability. It is unlikely that the current regimes, with perhaps the exception of Kyrgyzstan, will moderate and adopt more democratic practices in the near future; regime survival remains their priority at almost any cost. Perhaps one option for encouraging democratic transition over the long haul is to support small efforts aimed at civil society building. This approach also faces challenges because it could be construed as a threat to regime stability. In promoting democracy and human rights, the goals could range from increased levels of political representation for certain ethnicities or regions to an increase of citizen's rights. This would allow the international community the ability to provide smaller amounts of assistance with the promise of larger assistance, while not condemning the authoritative Central Asian governments. In other words, small efforts at civil society building could help plant the seeds of democracy. Increased education could also help with democratic transition over the long haul. Literacy rates are high in these states, thanks to the Soviet Union, but much ground can be gained in the way of developing education systems that teach world history, philosophy and critical thinking skills, all of which could aid in fostering democratic ideals. Ultimately, any democratic transition is unlikely in the near term.

**Economically**, Central Asia has high levels of poverty and unemployment and faces considerable economic challenges. Corruption continues to be a huge problem that goes hand-in hand with these countries' undemocratic practices. Corruption is unlikely to wane as long as the political dynamics in each country remain unchallenged.

These states also suffer from a lack of regional cooperation, particularly over trade and the sharing of natural resources such as water. This lack of cooperation affects economic growth, including the potential for shared hydro-electric power and crop irrigation, in addition to better trade agreements that would benefit all in the region. Sharing water has proven to be a significant challenge and may end up being a source of conflict between states in the near future.

Trafficking of narcotics is another problem that affects both security and the economies of these countries. The lucrativeness of the drug trade will likely persist and continue to degrade security conditions, as well as forms of the legitimate economy. Additionally, the drug trade connects the people of Central Asia to Afghanistan



regardless of ideology or ethnicity. This is truly a regional problem that requires more than domestic politics to mitigate; a new form of cooperation not yet seen in the region is in order.

These countries also have high rates of working aged males traveling abroad for employment. Currently Tajikistan has one of the highest rates of remittances as total GDP in the world.<sup>290</sup> This trend needs to be reversed in order for these countries to develop economically. However, this economic challenge presents a chicken-and-egg problem; men are needed at home to develop the economy, but they will not stay home until there are employment opportunities.

However, not all of the news is bad for Central Asian economies. Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan each have natural resources that could improve their economic profile. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have tremendous hydro-electric potential that, if developed, could provide a surplus of power that is able to meet their domestic needs and also be exported to their neighboring countries. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan both have access to the massive amounts of recoverable oil and gas resources of the Amu Darya Basin that can be used for domestic consumption and also potentially be exported. Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan all have varying amounts of minerals such as gold, antimony, and uranium.

The international community and the United States can help improve the economy in Central Asia through several means. One possible way would be through encouraging private businesses to invest in the Central Asian countries. American businesses would not only bring needed financial capital, but would also bring advanced technologies. Advanced technologies would allow more efficient extraction of natural resources and, in addition, promote better environmental conservation methods. These initiatives would also build jobs. Another way to improve the Central Asian economies is through increased regional collaboration on trade with better cooperation of customs at

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<sup>290</sup> “Remittance Man: Central Asia and its Russian Dependents,” *The Economist*, September 7, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21584999-russia-attempts-draw-tajikistan-and-kyrgyzstan-back-its-orbit-remittance-man>, as of October 17, 2014

border crossings serving as a potential building block. Increased trade among the Central Asian countries could lead to improved relations between these countries and a better appreciation of their mutual interests. As with reducing remittances, this is another chicken-and-egg problem: better diplomatic relations between states would help improve trade, but trade could provide the impetus for better diplomacy. The international community and the United States could help jump start this process by facilitating coordination and helping to build mutually reinforcing infrastructure.

The Central Asia-South Asia 1000 is but one program that if implemented could be mutually beneficial and transformative for the entire region. The CASA-1000 program is supported by the World Bank, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. State Department, and others with the goal of facilitating clean power export revenues for the Central Asian countries and alleviating electrical shortages in the South Asian countries.<sup>291</sup> While CASA-1000 includes Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, the construction of these hydro-electric facilities and supporting reservoirs provide better water management that can be beneficial for downstream neighbors such as Uzbekistan. More internationally supported initiatives like this that show the region's interdependence and fosters better regional cooperation could go a long way in developing the region diplomatically as well as economically.

**Socially**, these countries face several challenges as well. First, sub-state loyalties based on ethnicity and regionalism persist. This is particularly true in the Ferghana Valley where different ethnic groups are mixed and have tensions with one other. The Ferghana Valley is also where Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan meet geographically, and a lack of coordinated security plan has allowed for tensions to boil over into violence on several occasions. Ethnic, religious and regional tensions will continue to surface if underlying grievances are not addressed. Furthermore, regional, ethnic, religious, and tribal stresses will likely become intertwined with increased competition for access to natural resources, minimal political representation, economic

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<sup>291</sup> "About Us," CASA-1000, accessed September 29, 2014, <http://www.casa-1000.org/MainPages/CASAAbout.php#objective>

inequalities, and each respective government's increased use of repressive measures. These ethnic tensions are best addressed through gradual reforms in the political process—which, as mentioned, are unlikely in the near future—and small efforts aimed at civil society building. Economic efforts aimed at sharing scarce resources could also reduce these social tensions. As with political transformation, addressing ethnic tensions in the Ferghana Valley has no easy solutions.

Alongside ethnic tensions, another social concern in the region is disease. Currently, Tajikistan has the highest infection rates for tuberculosis per capita in the world; an infectious disease that affects economic performance through the loss of a working force. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan also exhibit significant cases of tuberculosis, while all three countries have recently recorded new HIV infections at a rate 14 times higher than in 2000, coinciding with increased injected drug use.<sup>292</sup> These countries also suffer from higher than normal diseases that are both water and foodborne. These diseases, which are preventable with basic sanitation and education, are negatively affecting social well-being and economic performance.

The international community and United States can aid social problems in Central Asia through several means. On the medical front, direct assistance through providing medical supplies and volunteer medics through NGOs and governments provides short term immediate assistance, but direct assistance by itself is not sustainable, nor does it change long term behavior. A more sustainable approach could place emphasis on educating medical providers to combat these diseases directly, while educating the local populace about disease transmission and disease prevention.

**Security**-wise, Central Asia will probably experience increases of violence as coalition forces withdraw from Afghanistan, but the reasons for the violence will likely

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<sup>292</sup> “Central Asia in the Spotlight: Growing HIV Epidemic among People Who Inject Drugs,” World Health Organization, June 19, 2012, <http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/sections/press-releases/2012/06/central-asia-in-the-spotlight-growing-hiv-epidemic-among-people-who-inject-drugs>

have as much to do with competition over natural resources, illicit trafficking, and frustrated populaces as they will with the ambitions of violent extremist organizations (VEOs) in the region.

The increased infiltrations of narcotic traffickers, in particular, are likely to pose security concerns. More frequent clashes between security forces and narcotic traffickers, as well as between competing narco-barons, will likely occur with increased drug trafficking. As discussed in Chapter IV, the violence that results from clashes between security forces and narcotic traffickers, and rivalries between drug cartels, could result in multiple civilian casualties and population displacement if left unchecked.

Furthermore, the thousands of kilometers of international borders that snake through and around Central Asia remain a security challenge for several reasons. First, the rugged and mountainous geography make large portions of the borders difficult to reach and, therefore, hard to monitor in the absence of technological assets such as drones. Second, large sections of these international borders are contested, especially in the Ferghana Valley, which often leads to border disputes between national security forces, or a lack of monitoring caused by incoherent state ownership. Third, the insufficient number of border guards who are responsible for securing the borders are often poorly trained, poorly equipped, and poorly paid conscripts, making them largely ineffective. Fourth, there is a lack of synchronization among the different national security forces in the region, which also affects border security. Lastly, these countries' governments lack a unified, coordinated effort aimed at regional border management and enforcement.

Each country could benefit from U.S. military advising and training. Specifically, U.S. Special Operations Forces (USSOF) could also aid with improving border security in several ways. First, USSOF could provide non-combat support both directly and indirectly using security assistance (SA) activities focused on countering narcotic trafficking. The scope of these activities range from counter narcotics training to personnel exchanges to joint exercises designed to build the capacity of all security forces, including border guards. Additionally, USSOF could teach vital life saving techniques through tactical combat casualty care (TCCC) and promote better

synchronization and planning among security forces involved with border security. Second, USSOF could provide non-lethal excess supplies such as cold weather clothing. Perhaps most importantly, USSOF could provide non-lethal low technology surveillance platforms. A low-tech drone could provide needed situational awareness of border areas while ensuring it is maintainable by host nation forces. Finally, USSOF could provide valuable training and advising to each country's security forces with the aim of better plans for mitigating violence and operations aimed at positively engaging the population in order to promote stability. USSOF would need to strike a careful balance between providing tactics, techniques and procedures that could be used to defend against legitimate threats and those that could be used to suppress civil society building within each country's borders.

All of these actions would allow U.S. military personnel to "keep a foot in the door" while providing U.S. diplomats leverage when dealing with government officials in the region. These resources would also go a long way in aiding and improving security forces in Central Asia.

#### **D. THE UNITED STATES: SHOULD IT STAY OR SHOULD IT GO?**

Finally, this thesis concludes by considering the possibility of the United States withdrawing from the region altogether at the end of 2014. An almost complete economic, military, and diplomatic disengagement from the region is an option, but there are significant costs of not staying engaged. First, Russia and China both view the Central Asian region as strategically important, but for different reasons. For Russia, Central Asia is a security concern due to the fears that Islamic extremism could spread in the region, affecting both Russia's Muslim population and drug trafficking.<sup>293</sup> For China, there are security concerns that Islamic extremism could inflame its volatile Xinjiang Muslim populace, but Central Asia is also important in supporting China's growing energy needs and enhancing economic development in China's impoverished regions.<sup>294</sup> As such,

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<sup>293</sup> Stephen Blank, *Central Asia after 2014* ( Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2013), 23, <http://purl.fdlp.gov/GPO/gpo44943>

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 86–87.

China and Russia have developed bilateral security agreements and provided economic incentives to Central Asian governments. A significantly reduced U.S. presence in the region would certainly be filled by Russian and China and hurt the United States' credibility for future interests in the region.

Furthermore, the credibility of the United States would suffer in the region and in the eyes of the international community if it were to withdraw completely at the end of 2014. Total disengagement would support the negative propaganda that America does not care about its allies. It, therefore, is not in the United States' best interests to completely disengage from Central Asia. Russia and China have geographic proximity, security, economic, and historical ties with the region that significantly enhance their influence in the region. America cannot and does not need to try and match China's economic assistance, or Russia's military assistance, to the region, but it does need to remain engaged and work towards better influence in the region.

Second, if Central Asian governments were to continue to weaken or collapse, it is likely violent extremist organizations (VEOs) would seek to capitalize on the resulting power vacuum. Recent and past history has shown that ungoverned areas can serve as areas for VEOs to train, recruit, and stage domestic and international attacks. The Ferghana valley, in particular, will continue to be an area where ethnic and religious tensions are heightened, and the potential for VEOs to spring up and cause regional problems is very real.

Finally, the United States can show its commitment to the region with a smaller military footprint that supports a "whole of government" approach as opposed to a larger military presence that serves a leading role. The goal for both Afghanistan and the key Central Asian states of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan should be continued engagement with the goal of improving the region's ability, governing the region better, care for its respective populations more effectively, defend its borders from regional threats, reduce illicit activity such as drug trafficking, and develop the region's economy in a sustainable and responsible manner. The cost of abandoning the region will prove much more costly than the time, talent and treasure invested to work towards these goals.

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